



# THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF "76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 14, 1902.

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## THE LIBERTY BOYS' JUSTICE; AND HOW THEY DEALT IT OUT.

By HARRY MOORE.



"You caused that house to be burned," said Dick sternly; "and you shall replace it, better than it was before, or I will hang you, and my 'Liberty Boys' shall burn a dozen Tory homes!"



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)



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## CHAPTER I.

### A CHIVALROUS REDCOAT AND A BRAVE GIRL.

"What are you, patriot or loyalist?"

"I am a patriot, sir."

"Ha! I thought you were a cursed rebel!"

"No, not a rebel; I am a friend of the men who are fighting for their liberty. Such men are not rebels."

"It is just what they are—no other name fits them, and when I get a chance at a rebel I believe in scotching him as I would a snake!"

"What do you mean to do, sir?"

"I am going to burn your house down over your head; that is what I am going to do!"

"Just like the minion of a cowardly and tyrant king!"

"Oh, father, please do not anger the gentleman!" in a woman's voice. "Don't say anything more; please don't!"

"He has already said too much, madam! Your home is doomed. I will give you ten minutes in which to get a few of your things out and when the time is up the house will be set on fire!"

It was an interesting and exciting scene.

In the yard in front of a large, old-fashioned house standing about four miles from Richmond, Virginia, were nine people. Six of these were British soldiers, one of whom wore the uniform of a captain; the other three were a man, a woman and a beautiful maiden of sixteen or seventeen years. These three were Thomas Walters, his wife, Mary, and daughter, Florence. This was their home, and the redcoats were a small detachment from the force under Arnold, the arch-traitor, who, having been forced to flee to the British on account of his terrible act of treason, had been given a commission in the British army, and was in command of a force having its headquarters near Richmond, Virginia—this being the year 1781, and the month of April. So far, about all Arnold had done was to burn and pillage; when in the patriot army he had been noted for his headlong valor and remarkable fighting qualities, but now he seemed to have lost all his abilities in that line. The truth was that he was so afraid that he

might become a prisoner of war, if he should go into battle, that he was careful not to do much in the way of fighting. He realized that he would receive short shrift and a particularly long rope if he were to be captured by the patriots.

When the British captain told the woman that he would give them ten minutes in which to get a few things out of the house, she burst into tears, and falling on her knees, held out her hands to him.

"Please, sir, if you have any manhood about you please do not burn our home!" she pleaded. "What good will it do you? And think of how we shall suffer if deprived of our home!"

The captain shook his head. "I have spoken," he said, sternly; "in ten minutes your house will be in flames, so if there are any special trinkets which you wish to save you had better hasten to remove them instead of whining here."

Thomas Walters took his wife by the arm and gently lifted her to her feet. "Don't waste time pleading with him, Mary," he said; "he is the unfeeling representative of a heartless tyrant, and it is useless. We may as well make up our minds to accept the inevitable."

"You are a coward and a scoundrel, sir!" cried Florence Walters, her beautiful eyes flashing. "No true man would speak thus to a woman!"

"Hello! what a spitfire we have here, eh, boys?" laughed the captain, though his face reddened and it was evident that he was cut somewhat by the remark.

The men laughed. "She is somewhat personal in her remarks, Captain Haddon," said one.

"That's right!" from another.

"She doesn't stop to pick and choose her words!"

"I tell the truth!" replied the spirited girl. "No true man will speak to a woman in a disrespectful manner, and nobody but cowards will go around the country, burning and pillaging as you and your comrades under the traitor, Arnold, are doing!"

"Phew!" whistled the captain; "more from the same source, and hot shot, too!"

"Daughter, daughter! be careful what you say!" warned Florence's mother, in an agony of terror. "Don't anger the gentlemen."



"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the captain, bowing mockingly to Mrs. Walter; "the old lady calls us gentlemen, and the young maiden calls us cowards and scoundrels! We can take our choice, eh, boys?"

The men laughed, and Florence looked at them with flashing eyes and seemed on the point of replying, but her mother placed her hand over the girl's mouth and said: "Sh! my daughter; don't say anything more."

"Oh, I wish I were a man!" said the girl, after gently removing the hand of her mother; "I would show you that it is dangerous to trifle with people who are determined to be free!"

"Say, I admire your spunk, young lady!" the captain said, his eyes drinking in the beauty of the beautiful, spirited face; "if I wasn't already in love, I'd make it my business to fall in love with you—I would, for a fact!"

"I'm not in love, captain!" cried one of the men, a sinister-looking fellow, who evidently thought he was handsome. "I guess I shall have to make love to her!"

"Oh, daughter! see what you are doing by speaking as you have!" half whispered the frightened mother. "Please, please do not say anything more to anger them!"

"What I say won't make them mad, mother," was the quiet reply; "they are naturally scoundrels, anyway, and will go ahead with their cowardly work, even if one remains silent."

"Five minutes have elapsed," announced the captain, after a glance at his watch; "if you are going to save anything out of the house you had better hurry."

"Please don't burn the house!" pleaded Mrs. Walters.

The redcoat frowned. "It will do no good to plead," he said severely; "just remember what I have said, and act accordingly. In five minutes your house will be in flames!"

"We could save nothing of moment in that short time," said Florence; "so we might as well wait patiently for you to do your cruel work."

"If they won't stir themselves to save something, why should we not see if we can't save something, captain?" asked one of the soldiers, with a significant wink and grin.

"That is a good idea," the captain said; "hurry, boys, and get what you can in a short time. We mustn't delay too long at this one place or Arnold will roast us."

"You will all roast one of these days—down below!" said Florence, and the men laughed as if they thought that a good joke.

"Hear her!" cried one.

"She is a spitfire, sure enough!" from another.

"I have told the truth!" cried the girl, spiritedly.

"After we have saved some valuables from the house I shall surely have to take a few kisses to pay me for being talked to in such a severe manner!" cried the redcoat who had said he guessed he would have to make love to her.

"Oh, daughter! you are very, very unwise in talking thus to those dreadful men!" murmured Mrs. Walters.

"I can't help it, mother," was the reply; "they are such contemptible scoundrels that I must tell them what I think of them."

"But it isn't always best to tell everybody just what you feel like telling them, Florence."

"I can't help that, either. There isn't much policy about me. I am what I am, and believe in telling any one just what I think of them."

The redcoats, with the exception of one who had remained behind to hold the horses, had already entered the house and were rummaging about in search of valuables of any kind.

"Oh, if brother were only here now!" murmured Florence, presently; "those men would not carry things with such a high hand, I am thinking!"

"I am glad he isn't here," said Mrs. Walters; "he would only lose his life if he were to try to do anything against six men."

"He could put the entire crowd to flight!" declared Florence, confidently; "I know he could!"

"If he has as much grit as you have, miss, and is as great a fighter as he should be to go with it, he would make the six of us jump around pretty lively!" said the trooper who was holding the horses and who was not such a bad fellow, even though a redcoat.

"I am half inclined to think that perhaps you have some manhood in your make-up," said Florence, with an approving glance at the man from under her long eye-lashes.

The man flushed with pleasure and doffed his hat. "Thank you, miss," he said, "I hope so. I can tell you one thing, at any rate, and that is, that I don't fancy this sort of business at all. To my mind it is very poor work to be engaged in, this pillaging and burning, and I wish that I didn't have to engage in it."

"Why do you do it, then?"

"I can't help myself, miss; I have to obey orders, you know. That is the first thing a soldier learns, and no matter what he is told to do or how bad he hates to do it, he has to obey."

"Well, I wouldn't!" declared Florence, her eyes flashing. "No man, even though he were a superior officer, could force me to do mean, cowardly things such as burn-



ing and pillaging houses and rendering people homeless."

"You would be taken out and shot if you refused to obey orders, miss."

"I would run away."

"And then, if caught, you would be shot."

"I don't care; I would take the chances."

There were a few moments of silence, and then the redcoat spoke. "You had better be careful when the men come out of the house, miss," he said; "that fellow who said he thought he would have to make love to you is a bad one, and he is liable to offer you insult if you say anything he doesn't like."

"I'll tell him what I think of him if he says anything to me!" the girl declared.

"Oh, Florence, you really must not say a word when they come out!" said her mother, an alarmed look on her face.

"No; you had better keep quiet, daughter," said her father.

"It will be best, miss," from the redcoat; "some of the men are bad enough without making them angry."

Presently the five redcoats came forth from the house and all were carrying articles which they had found and which had struck their fancy or which they considered to be of some value. The soldier who had said he would have to make love to Florence, had secured quite a lot of silver, and was in a very good humor.

"I had good luck," he said, "and am feeling in such a splendid humor that I really must celebrate by kissing this spirited maiden!" He turned toward Florence, first placing his silver on the ground. "Come, miss; give me a kiss!" he said, attempting to take her in his arms.

Spat! Florence had given the impudent redcoat a slap on the side of the face. It was a hard slap, too, and must have smarted, for it made the man's face red. It angered him terribly, too, and he gave utterance to a curse and leaped forward and seized Florence.

"Now I have you, you hussy!" he cried, in fiendish triumph. "I'll kiss you not once but a dozen times! I'll make you wish you had not shown your claws, you tiger-cat!"

"Release me!" cried Florence, struggling fiercely. "Release me, you scoundrel—you coward! Help!—father, don't let him—kiss me!"

Mr. Walters started forward to his daughter's assistance, but was seized and held by a couple of the redcoats, who laughed and said: "Hold on, old man! Don't interfere. Besides, it won't hurt the girl to be kissed a few

times. She must learn some time and we are the boys who can teach her."

"You cowards!" cried Mr. Walters.

"Hard words break no bones, old man!" was the sneering reply.

Florence was still struggling, and was so strong that she managed to keep the redcoat from kissing her. He became angry presently, and seizing her arms gave them such a twist that a cry of agony escaped the girl's lips. "Oh!" she cried. "You coward! you demon! Oh, if my brother were only here he would make you suffer for this!"

There came a sudden interruption and from a most unexpected source. The redcoat who had held the horses while the others were in the house and who had talked in such a manly fashion, suddenly leaped forward. "I am not your brother, miss," he cried, "but I have a sister at home, and I am going to act toward you as I would act toward her, or as I would wish any one else to act toward her if they were in my place. Take that, you scoundrel!"

"That!" was a terrible blow which he delivered with all his force and which caught his comrade full on the jaw, knocking him down as if he had been struck with a sledgehammer, and rendering him temporarily unconscious.

Then the redcoat leaped back and drawing a pair of pistols, faced his comrades with undaunted mien.

"I have rendered myself liable to death by knocking out a comrade," he cried, in a clear, defiant voice, "but it doesn't matter. I would do it again; and if you fellows attempt to lay a hand on me you do it at your peril!"

"You are a brave and noble man!" cried Florence. "You are a gentleman, and you shall not fight them alone and unaided, for I will help you!"

Then springing to where the senseless redcoat lay she drew a pair of pistols from his belt, and, cocking them, leaped forward. Taking her position beside the friendly redcoat and extending the weapons, she cried, in a ringing voice:

"Now come on, if you dare, you cowards!"

## CHAPTER II.

### A BRAVE STAND.

It was a tableau worthy the brush of a master painter. The redcoats stood staring in open-mouthed amazement. The action of their comrade, in knocking his fellow-soldier out, had paralyzed them; for they were not expecting any-



thing of the kind. And before they had recovered the use of their faculties the girl had secured the pistols and taken her position beside the man who had come to her assistance.

This aroused them. They suddenly drew their pistols and murmurs escaped their lips. "Drop those pistols and step to one side, girl!" cried Captain Haddon. "We are going to make a prisoner of this traitor, or kill him—just as he elects; and if you don't wish to get hurt you had better get out of the way."

"He stood by me at the risk of his life; now I will stand by him!" was the undaunted reply from the brave girl. "I am a farmer's daughter, and have been used to handling weapons all my life and I can shoot as well as any man. I hold the lives of two of your men in my hands and I swear that if you make a move to harm this man by my side I will take their lives!"

"You had better draw out of the affair, miss," said the redcoat who had befriended her; "I am doomed, I guess, anyway, and there is no need of you getting yourself into trouble on my account."

"Didn't you get yourself into trouble on my account?"

"Yes, but——"

"There are no 'buts' about it; you stood by me and I shall stand by you to the bitter end. If they attack you they will have to reckon with me. I will stand here and fight to the death!"

"You are a brave girl!" murmured the soldier, in admiration; "I hope no harm will come to you through me."

"If it does, let it come!"

"See here, miss, this is all foolishness on your part," protested Captain Haddon, who, to tell the truth, did not relish the task of trying to make a prisoner of the trooper if he was to make a fight and be assisted by the brave girl; "you had better draw out of the affair—and you, Sheldon," to the soldier, "had better surrender and not show fight."

"I am not going to surrender," was the grim, determined reply; "I would rather die here, making a fight for my life, than to be taken back to Arnold to be hanged!"

"That's right—don't surrender!" cried Florence, who had the heart of a soldier. "I will fight with you to the death!"

"Oh, Florence! Florence!" almost moaned her mother, "please, oh, please come away!"

But the girl shook her head. "Never, mother! I will help this brave man, as he helped me. With the pistols I am the equal of any man, and two of those scoundrels

shall die by my hand if they do not go away and leave us alone!"

The truth was that Florence had suddenly taken a great liking to the brave trooper. She did not stop to analyze her feelings; all she knew was that he was a handsome fellow, and that he had risked his life to save her from insult. She consulted nothing but her feelings, and they told her to stand her ground and fight by the side of the man who had befriended her, and she was going to do it.

Mr. Walters said nothing, but while he was afraid his daughter would be killed, he did not blame her for the stand she had taken. He knew that she was a good shot, and that if the redcoats made the attack they would be damaged as much by the bullets from Florence's pistols as from those held by the trooper. He cautiously looked around for a club or something which he could seize and use as a weapon, for he was determined to take a hand as soon as the firing was over and help the trooper and at the same time make the attempt to get Florence out of harm's way.

The redcoats seemed to hardly know what to do. They realized that if they attacked, some of them would lose their lives. They well knew that while Sheldon was a quiet fellow who never had much to say, he was as brave as a lion and as dangerous when aroused. He would be fighting for his life and would undoubtedly put up a strong fight; and then there was the girl to be reckoned with. That she was a good shot with the pistols they did not doubt, for they had seen enough of the people of America since coming across the ocean to know that the women were often hardy and brave, and expert in the use of rifle or pistol. They did not doubt that one or both of the bullets from the girl's weapons would find a resting place in the bodies of some of them. So they stood still and hesitated.

"The best thing you can do is to go on about your business, boys, and let me alone," said Sheldon, quietly.

"Never!" cried Captain Haddon. "We are not going to leave here until after we have made a prisoner or a corpse of you, and have burned the house of this rebel and punished this hussy for her insolence."

The captain was angry, and was all the more angry because at the present moment the two seemed to have the best of the affair. True, they were five to two, but the two had their pistols leveled and could fire before the five could level their weapons.

The redcoat who had been knocked senseless now began to show signs of returning consciousness, and at the same



instant one of the five redcoats suddenly exclaimed: "Yonder comes somebody down the road. There seems to be a party of them. Who do you suppose they are?"

Captain Haddon looked in the direction indicated and an exclamation of vexation escaped him.

"They are not British troopers!" he cried. "If they are not Tories I don't know who they can be."

"Maybe it is a band of Whigs, captain," said one of the men, nervously. "Don't you think we had better be getting away from here?"

Sheldon had smiled in a scornful manner at first. His idea was that the men were trying to play a trick on him, and that nobody was coming. He thought it a ruse to get him to turn his head to look, when they would attack him; but a remark from Mrs. Walters proved to him that he was mistaken—that somebody was coming, sure enough.

"Oh, I hope and pray that they are friends!" were the words uttered by the frightened woman.

"I think we had better get away from here, boys!" suddenly cried the captain. "I don't like the looks of those fellows. A couple of you get Wallace up and on his horse, if possible, and we will get away from here in a hurry!"

Wallace was the redcoat who had been knocked senseless by Sheldon, and he was now trying to get to his feet. A couple of his comrades hastened forward and assisted him to rise, and to his horse, and lifted him into the saddle. Then the others hastened to mount, but before they could get started away Florence leaped forward, and, leveling her pistol at Wallace, cried out: "You have some of our silver in your pockets. Give it up or I will shoot you!"

Wallace was still somewhat dazed, but he understood what was said and he hastened to empty his pockets, dropping the articles to the ground.

"Now away with you, men!" cried Captain Haddon. "We must not stay here and take chances on those fellows being friends. They may be enemies."

They stuck spurs into the flanks of their horses and rode away at a gallop, and the four who were left behind stood and watched the approaching party of horsemen with interest. There were about a hundred of the newcomers, and they were a fine-looking lot, as could be seen as they drew near. They did not look to be on an average more than twenty-one years of age, and they were handsome, bronzed fellows and well armed.

"I guess I may as well stay here and see what happens," said the redcoat trooper, Sheldon; "if they are patriot

soldiers I may lose my life, but I can't help it. I would lose it if I followed my late comrades, just the same."

"Stay where you are," said Florence, her eyes shining; "if they are patriots you are safe, for I shall not permit them to harm you."

The band of horsemen was almost at hand now, and a moment later the foremost riders brought their horses to a halt within a few feet of the little group. The leader of the party, a handsome young fellow with keen, blue-gray eyes and firm mouth and chin, drew a pistol and leveled it at the man wearing the British uniform, with the words, calmly spoken yet with grim determination:

"You are my prisoner, Sir Redcoat! Up with your hands or you are a dead man!"

Instantly Florence Walters leaped in front of Sheldon, and, extending her pistols which she still retained, she cried out:

"I believe you are patriots and friends, but if you try to harm a hair of this man's head, some of you will die! He saved me from insult at the hands of one of his own comrades, who have just fled, and thereby placed his own life in jeopardy; and if you make a prisoner of him you will have to first kill me! He is here because of his brave act, and he shall be permitted to leave without let or hindrance, or——"

The girl's voice was drowned by a wild cheer from the throats of the hundred newcomers, who swung their hats and cheered till they were heard by the fleeing redcoats, who were frightened by the sound, thinking it meant that they were to be pursued.

The pistol was returned to the belt of the leader of the party, and doffing his hat he bowed low over his horse's neck, and, as soon as he could make himself heard, said:

"Young lady, you need have no fear that we will harm the man who has proven himself to be a true-hearted, noble man. We admire and honor one who can do what he has, according to your statement, done, and to prove to you that I mean this, we will give three cheers for the redcoat who has proven himself to be a man. Now, boys, all together!"

And then the cheers were given for Sheldon, who lifted his hat, and, red-faced and blushing, bowed his thanks to the youths for the honor which had been shown him.

"May I ask who and what you gentlemen are, sir?" asked Mr. Walters, whose curiosity could no longer be restrained.

"Certainly, sir; my name is Dick Slater, and these," indicating his comrades with a wave of the hand, "are 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"



## CHAPTER III.

## A NEW RECRUIT.

"The Liberty Boys of '76!" exclaimed Mr. Walters, his jaws spreading apart in amazement.

"Yes, sir; have you ever heard of us?"

"Have we ever heard of you? Well, I should say we have heard of you!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Florence. "And I know from what I have heard that there is no danger that you will not treat us right and fairly, so I will put these things away," and she lowered the pistols, and, stepping back, laid them on the ground by a pile of the silver which had been taken from the house by the redcoats.

"You say those men who departed as we approached were redcoats?" asked Dick.

"Yes," replied Mr. Walters.

"How many were there?"

"Five."

"And what were they doing here?"

"They were going to burn my home."

"The scoundrels!" escaped Dick's lips, and then he looked down the road in an undecided manner.

"If I thought we could catch them we would give chase," he said, half musingly; "but their horses are probably fresher than ours and the probabilities are that we could not catch them."

"I doubt it," was the reply.

"Are their horses fresh?" Dick asked of the redcoat.

"Reasonably so, sir," was the reply; "we have just come this far from Richmond, and did not ride very fast either."

"And how far is it to Richmond?"

"About four miles."

"Then it would be folly for us to try to catch them."

"I think so, sir; and, then, you might run into some large parties as there are a number out."

"If they were not too large we should enjoy that," was the quiet reply.

"Well, I don't think any of them would be larger than your party; you have about a hundred men, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Then they would not outnumber you; but they might ambush you and take you at a disadvantage."

"Exactly; well, I guess we will not try to catch the fleeing men. But about yourself, my friend? What will you do now that you have gotten yourself into such disrepute with your own people?"

"I hardly know," was the hesitating reply. "One thing is certain, I can't go back to the British army."

"I should judge not."

"No; it would be as much as my life is worth to do so."

"Then what will you do?"

The redcoat looked at Dick for a few moments, ran his eyes over the "Liberty Boys," and then glanced toward Florence Walters. His mind seemed made up very quickly.

"I'll tell you what I will do," he said, quietly; "if you will permit me to do it."

"What?"

"Join your company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

The British soldier watched Dick closely, eagerly and somewhat anxiously. Evidently he was afraid the youth might refuse to accept him, when he would be in a dangerous situation indeed; for he would be in danger from both the British and patriots. Another watched Dick anxiously, too, and that was Florence. She hoped that the captain of the "Liberty Boys" would say, yes.

Dick hesitated an instant, gave the face of the redcoat a keen, searching look, and then turned toward the members of the company.

"Boys," he called out, "you have heard this man's proposition—that he will join our company and fight for the liberty and independence of our people, if we will let him do so; and now I am going to leave it to a vote whether or not he shall do so. All in favor of it say, 'yes.'"

"Yes!" came the cry, in a roar.

"All who are opposed to it say, 'no.'"

There was no reply.

Dick turned toward the redcoat, and, with a smile, said: "You are elected. Three cheers, boys, for the new recruit!"

The cheers were given with a will and the eyes of Sheldon shone with pleasure, as did also the eyes of Florence Walters.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come over to our side and joined the 'Liberty Boys!'" cried Florence, stepping forward and giving Sheldon her hand. "I congratulate you!"

"Thank you!" said the ex-redcoat, flushing. And then he turned toward the "Liberty Boys" and said: "I thank you, one and all, for the confidence which you have shown in me by making me a member of your company. I shall try not to do anything to make you sorry for what you have done."

"I don't think there is any danger that you will do anything to make us sorry for what we have done," said Dick, quietly; "and now, what is your name?"

"Don Sheldon."



"Very good; is that your horse, Mr. Sheldon?" pointing to one standing near, bridled and saddled.

"Yes; that is my horse."

"Good; then you are all fitted out, save for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"Your uniform must be doffed and an ordinary suit of citizen's clothing donned in its place. It would never do for you to continue to wear that, as the British would know who you were as far as they could see you."

"True; but I don't know where I can get a suit."

"I know," said Mrs. Walters; "we have a son who is now in the patriot army, and there are several suits of his old clothes here. You can have one of them."

"And he is just about your size, too, Mr. Sheldon," said Mr. Walters; "so I think his clothes will just about fit you."

"That will do nicely," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Sheldon; "I shall be very much obliged for the clothes."

"You are more than welcome!" Mr. Walters hastened to say. "After what you did for Florence here a while ago I guess we can let you have a suit of old clothes."

Dick, who had remarkably sharp eyes and who had watched the faces of the redcoat and Florence, said to himself that Mr. and Mrs. Walters would have to give Sheldon more than a suit of old clothes some day, if the man lived; for it was evident that the girl and the ex-redcoat were very much pleased with each other.

Mr. Walters and Sheldon entered the house and the "Liberty Boys" alighted from their horses to stretch their legs while waiting. Dick asked Mrs. Walters and Florence a number of questions regarding the redcoats who had been there, and what they had said, done and threatened. Then he went to the door of the house and called out: "Bring your uniform when you come, Sheldon; it may come in handy as a disguise, some time, if it becomes necessary to visit the encampment of the British."

Presently the two emerged from the house and Sheldon was dressed in a rough suit, which made him look quite different from when he was in the uniform. There was a pleased look on his face, however, and it was plain that he was glad to get out of the uniform.

"There is the uniform that I now hate the looks of," he said, as he handed the bundle to Dick; "I hope that it will be of some benefit to the patriot cause."

"I hope so," said Dick; "and I rather think that it will be."

"Which way are you going?" asked Mr. Walters of Dick.

"Well, we are going no way in particular," was the

reply; "we have come down here to assist in holding Arnold in check and rendering as much aid as possible to those who are fighting for their liberty and independence."

"Then why not stay here over night? It is within an hour of sundown and you could not do much, anyway. You had better camp down right here. I have a large house, as you can see, and can bed fifty or sixty of you, while the rest can sleep in the barn."

"Thank you," said Dick; "but that won't be necessary. We are used to sleeping out of doors; and, indeed, in this nice weather it is more comfortable than sleeping indoors. I believe we will camp here over night, however, and if you have anything extra in the way of food supplies we shall be glad to accept of it, for we have been compelled to subsist on what we could get hold of handily as we rode through the country."

"I have hams and shoulders enough to feed three times the number you have with you, and you shall have all you can eat. And I will put some of the negro women to work baking bread and you shall have all the bread you need also."

"Thanks! That will be splendid," said Dick; "we shall enjoy having enough to eat of something that is good and wholesome, I assure you."

"Three cheers for Mr. Walters!" cried Bob Estabrook, who was delighted by the prospect of plenty of good food, and the others gave the cheers with a will, for all were like Bob.

"Go in and set the women to work, baking, Mary," said Mr. Walters; "I will show the young men where will be a nice place to camp, and where they may get feed for their horses."

The youths were soon in camp and had watered and fed their horses. Then they built camp-fires and got ready to cook the meat which Mr. Walters had promised them. They were young, healthy and hearty, and were always ready to eat.

It was just sundown when the first batch of big, round loaves of bread were brought out to the "Liberty Boys," and when they saw the fresh bread they gave utterance to a shout of delight. Then Mr. Walters told them to come to the smokehouse, and they went. He handed out five or six great, big hams, and as many shoulders, and the youths hastened back to the camp-fires, eager to get the meat to cooking. The camp utensils were gotten out and soon the smell of the frying meat went up on the air and the boys sniffed in delight. A score of big, round loaves lay near, on a table-cloth belonging to Mrs. Walters, and half an hour later the boys were eating a meal that they



thought was the best they had ever eaten in their lives.

They had just finished eating when there came the sound of hoofbeats of many horses, and Dick leaped to his feet and cried out:

"To arms, boys! It may be the British!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE REDCOATS ARE ROUTED.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" seized their muskets and ran around behind the barn, which was a large, rambling structure and would give good protection in case the newcomers were redecoats and made an attack.

Dick left the boys ensconced behind the barn and stole to the house and entered at the back door. He made his way through and into the front room, where he found Mr. and Mrs. Walters and Florence, who looked somewhat frightened.

"Redcoats?" asked Dick, in a cautious voice.

"Yes; and a lot of them, too!" replied Mr. Walters. "Just take a peep out of the window."

Dick did so; and as there was a moon he could see fairly well. He saw quite a large body of horsemen out in the road, but one of the men had dismounted and was approaching the front door. Dick made a quick estimate of the number of the redecoats—for he could see that they wore British uniforms—and decided that there were not to exceed two hundred.

"I believe we can whip them out of their boots!" he said to himself; and then he stepped to Mr. Walters' side and said, rapidly and cautiously: "A redcoat is coming to the door. Keep him parleying as long as possible. You understand?"

"Yes; you are going to attack them?"

"Yes."

Dick hastened out of the room just as there came a knock on the front door.

Mr. Walters did not at once open the door, but instead stood still and called out: "Who is there?"

"Captain Haddon," was the reply; "I was here this afternoon and I have come back after that deserter-traitor, Sheldon! Open the door at once or it will be broken down!"

Mr. Walter stepped to the door and opened it. "The man you speak of is not here," he said.

"Not here?" There was incredulity in the tone.

"No."

"Then he is with those men who rode up as we went away!" the captain said, positively.

"Well, what if he is?" remarked Mr. Walters.

"Just this: We are going to have him if we have to kill every one of his new friends! I suppose the camp-fires out yonder are theirs?"

"Perhaps so."

"I know they are, so it doesn't matter whether you acknowledge it or not. I suppose the strangers are out there?"

"Perhaps you had better go and see for yourself," said Florence, who found it almost impossible to keep still.

"Oh, you are still able to talk saucy, are you?" remarked the captain, mockingly.

"I am," was the prompt reply; "but you won't be long after you go out where the strangers are."

"Oho! you think not, eh?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well; Miss Spitfire, I am going to prove to you that you are mistaken. I shall take my men and go out there and give those strangers the worst thrashing they ever had."

"If you knew who the strangers are you wouldn't talk so confidently," cried Florence.

"Humph! who are they?"

"They are the 'Liberty Boys,' of whom you have no doubt often heard."

The captain stared, and gave utterance to an exclamation of amazement not unmixed with consternation. "You don't mean it!" he said. "I don't believe it!"

"You will be ready to believe it by the time they get through with you!" was the significant reply.

"But the 'Liberty Boys' are away up North."

"You will find that they are away down South, and that very soon, too!"

The captain hardly knew what to think. He stared from one to the other of the three and then he addressed Mr. Walters in threatening tones and asked: "Is this the truth, sir?"

"It is," was the prompt reply; "but I don't think my daughter should have told you."

The redecoat was almost convinced. He looked worried, and after hesitating for a few moments, started to leave. He had just turned around when there suddenly arose the sound of a terrible tumult. There was the clash of weapons and the rattle of firearms, intermingled with which were the cheers of the "Liberty Boys" and the wild yells of the redecoats.

"The 'Liberty Boys' have attacked the redecoats!" cried



Florence. "Good! good! I hope they will kill every one of the scoundrels!"

The captain did not answer, but with a muttered exclamation of rage and dismay he hastened away.

On leaving the house, a few minutes before, Dick had hastened back to where the "Liberty Boys" were awaiting him, behind the barn.

"Come, boys," he said, eagerly, "we must make an attack on the redcoats before they have time to do any deviltry. Follow me and we will make a half circuit and surprise them."

He hastened away, the "Liberty Boys" following. As they went they looked to their weapons and got them in readiness for quick work when the time should come to them.

They made a half circuit and came upon the redcoats from the rear. The troopers were looking toward the house and were not keeping watch behind them, consequently it was easy to take them by surprise.

The youths crept up as close as they could, and when one of the redcoats happened to glance back and saw them, Dick gave the order to fire. This was done, and a volley was poured into the enemy at close range.

The British soldiers gave utterance to wild yells of dismay, and then the "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to their battle cry of, "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" and charged forward, firing from their small arms as they came.

The scene was now something terrible. The horses were so frightened that they leaped, plunged and reared, and many of them being riderless and without a guiding hand, went plunging about as they pleased, trampling upon the dead and wounded, the screams of the latter sounding above the uproar.

It was more than even the trained veterans of the British army could stand, and they put whip and spurs to the horses and dashed away at full speed, eager to get away from the vicinity of such terrible fighters as were the "Liberty Boys."

Captain Haddon had not quite reached the gate when his men fled, and knowing it would be suicidal to go out into the road he turned and ran toward some timber which bordered the road to the southward. He reached the timber, and seeing a riderless horse coming down the road he ran out in front of the animal and succeeded in catching it. Mounting hastily he rode away in pursuit of his fleeing men.

"This is terrible!" he said to himself as he rode onward. "To think that two hundred of the king's soldiers have

been put to flight in such a manner. I would," said he, "believed it possible!"

Just then he heard the sound of hoofbeats behind him, and looking back he saw a horseman coming after him. It was bright moonlight and the pursuing horseman was close enough so that the captain recognized him.

"It is that traitorous scoundrel, Sheldon!" he said to himself. "I wonder why he is pursuing me?"

Then a thought came to the officer: "Maybe he wants to come back to us and take his place in the British army again," he said to himself. "Well, if he thinks he will be allowed to do that he is badly mistaken. If he comes back he will be hanged like the traitor he is!"

Just then the pursuing horseman called out: "Hold on, Captain Haddon; I wish to speak to you!"

## CHAPTER V.

### FLORENCE IS MISSING.

The captain halted the horse as quickly as he could, and waited for the ex-redcoat, who was by his side in a few moments.

"Well," said the captain, "what do you want? Want to come back, I suppose?"

"You ask if I wish to come back to the British army?" asked Sheldon.

"That is what you want, isn't it?"

"Well, I rather think not! Why, Captain Haddon, King George hasn't enough money to get me to come back into the army if I were guaranteed that I should escape punishment for what I have done."

"What! You don't wish to come back?"

The captain was evidently greatly astonished.

"I do not. I am done with the British army for good and all. And, do you know, Haddon, I think that King George is a blamed tyrant? I never thought so until recently, but now I can see it very plainly."

"Great Scott! you are a traitor, sure enough, Sheldon!" cried the captain, in angry tones.

"I am not a king's man any longer; of that you may be sure!" was the prompt reply. "He is a scoundrel and tyrant! What right has he to make the people of this country pay tribute to him? He has never been over here, and has never seen any of the people of this country. He doesn't care anything about them save as he is enabled to become richer through them."



thought was—  
 They, Haddon gasped. "Blazes! you are the rankest rebel I have run across in a long time, Sheldon!" he cried. "But if you don't want to come back into the British army, why have you followed me?"

"I was told to do so by my commander, and——"

"Your commander!"

"Yes; my new one—the captain of the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"What! have you indeed joined the rebels?"

"I have, and I was in the fight, and think I knocked over two or three of your redcoated men back there a few minutes ago, Captain Haddon." This was said coolly and calmly.

"Blazes!" cried the captain in anger, "I have a good mind to run you through, you traitor!" He took hold of the hilt of his sword as he spoke, but did not draw it for he found himself looking down the muzzle of a pistol, as quick as a flash.

"Don't try to draw, captain," said Sheldon, calmly; "if you do, I shall put a bullet through you!"

The captain's hand dropped instantly. "What do you want?" he asked sullenly.

"I was sent by my commander, Dick Slater, to tell you that you should return with fifteen or twenty men and take care of your wounded and bury your dead. We cannot be burdened with the wounded men."

"Oh, that is what you want, eh?"

"Yes."

"I suppose he thinks he will get a score of us back there in his power and massacre the whole of us."

"No, I don't think you need be at all afraid of that, captain. He said to tell you that you would not be interfered with in any respect or bothered in any way."

"And do you think he will keep his word?"

"I am sure of it."

The captain was silent a few moments, pondering, and then he said: "Very well; tell Dick Slater that twenty of us will return soon and bury the dead and look after the wounded."

"All right; I'll tell him."

The captain rode onward at a gallop, then, and Sheldon turned his horse's head in the opposite direction and rode back to the scene of the recent encounter. He found Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys" doing what they could for the wounded redcoats.

"Did you catch up with any of them?" asked Dick, as Sheldon rode up.

"Yes; I overtook Captain Haddon."

"What did he say?"

"That he would return soon with twenty men and would bury the dead and look after the wounded."

"Good! How long will it be before they get back here, do you think?"

"I couldn't say; an hour, doubtless."

His guess was close to the mark, for it was a little more than an hour later when the redcoats put in an appearance. There were twenty of the men under Captain Haddon, and the captain dismounted and approached Dick Slater.

"Are you Dick Slater?" he asked.

"I am," was the reply.

"Will you promise that we shall not be interfered with or fired upon if my men come here and go to work?" he asked.

The men had halted some fifty yards back and were waiting the order of their commander before advancing farther.

"I have already given the promise," replied Dick, coldly. "Do you think we are barbarians, that we would so violate the rules of war as to fire upon your men under such circumstances?"

"Well, I didn't know," was the hesitating reply. "I wished to make sure."

"Tell your men to come at once," said Dick; "a number of these poor fellows are suffering greatly," pointing to the wounded men, "and the quicker you get them to where they may be attended to properly the better for them."

"That's right, captain," said one of the wounded men who was lying near, "and you needn't be afraid this fellow won't keep his word with you; he'll do it, for he's white and square, if he is a rebel; for he has done his best to make us fellows comfortable while waiting for you to come."

The captain called to his men and they approached. They dismounted and went among the wounded and made a brief survey of the situation.

"There are ten of the boys who are wounded and will have to be taken back to Richmond," said the captain; "I must get a couple of wagons. I wonder if this man here will let us have them?" the last to Dick.

"If you will give a promise that the teams and wagons will be brought back again," replied Dick, "I think there will be no difficulty about securing what you wish here."

"You are welcome to the teams and wagons, sir," said Mr. Walters, who was standing near; "all I ask is that they be returned to me."



"I give you my word of honor that they shall be brought back to you before morning, sir," said the captain.

"Very well; I will have the teams hitched up at once."

Mr. Walters hastened away and called a couple of negroes out of a cabin and told them what was wanted, and they went to work to harness the horses and hitch them up.

"Drive out into the road when you have finished hitching up," ordered Mr. Walters.

"All right, Massa Walters," was the reply.

Mr. Walters then returned to the road and found the redcoats engaged in digging a long trench over in a field, and when it was finished the dead soldiers were interred. By this time the negroes were on hand with the wagons and the wounded men were placed in the ample wagon-beds, on the bottom of which a thick layer of straw had been placed, and then the redcoats took their departure; the negroes, in accordance with a command from Mr. Walters, going along to drive and bring the teams back.

"Do you think there is any danger of an attack from the redcoats to-night, Dick?" asked Bob, when the enemy had disappeared.

"I don't think so, Bob; but I am going to place sentinels out so as to do away with any chance of our being taken by surprise."

Mr. Walters called Dick and asked him to come into the house. "I wish to have a talk with you," he said.

Dick entered the house and found Mrs. Walters and Florence in the sitting-room, busy in conversation over the exciting events of the evening.

They greeted Dick pleasantly and were eager to hear what he had to say regarding the affair. Dick was not much of a talker, however, and waited for Mr. Walters to tell why he had asked him to come in.

"I wished to ask you what is to be done, Mr. Slater?" said the farmer. "You are not going to remain in this vicinity long, I take it?"

"Well, I could not say how long I shall remain here, Mr. Walters," was the reply; "I have been sent down here by the commander-in-chief to co-operate with Generals Lafayette, Marion and others, and shall remain here until I can locate them and report; when I will, of course, be subject to their orders."

"That is the point, Mr. Slater, and I am wondering what will become of us when you and your men are gone?"

Dick was silent a few moments. Then he said: "You are afraid the redcoats will come here and burn your home?"

"Yes, that is what I fear. They have had bad luck

twice at my home, and will not rest until they have had revenge on me."

"I fear there is some grounds for your fears," said Dick, slowly; "but perhaps there is some way out of the matter."

"Well, if you can think of some way to avoid such consequences I hope you will let me know."

"I shall do so; and I think I know of something that may be done. About how many patriot families are there in this vicinity?"

"In how big a scope do you mean?"

"Well, say within the territory embraced in a circle three miles distant from here?"

"Mr. Walters pondered for a few moments. "I should say that there are thirty Whig families living within three miles of us," he said, presently.

"Thirty, eh?"

"Yes."

"How many men and boys are there in these thirty families, do you think?"

"You mean boys who are big enough to fight?"

"Yes; who can shoot with muskets, rifles or pistols."

"Well, I should say there are perhaps a hundred all told."

"That isn't so bad," said Dick, with a nod of satisfaction. "One hundred brave and determined men can do a good deal, and I suggest that a band of 'Home Protectors' be organized at once."

Mr. Walters, and his wife and daughter as well, seemed to be favorably impressed by the idea.

"I believe that is a good idea!" said the former.

"I think so," from Mrs. Walters.

"Yes, indeed!" from Florence. "By organizing and arranging so that the men can be called together quickly on receiving certain signals which may be decided upon, it would be possible to make considerable trouble for any party of redcoats that might put in an appearance."

"You are right," agreed Dick; "and if you like, Mr. Walters, we will put in the day, to-morrow, at that work. We should be able to get pretty much around the circle in a day."

"Very well; I shall be glad to have your assistance, Mr. Slater, as I know you have had considerable experience in such matters and will be able to tell us just how to go about it to make the plan a success."

"I will help you all I can, sir," replied Dick, and then, after some further conversation, he bade them good-night and went out to where the boys were encamped; and after



making the rounds and seeing that the sentinels were properly stationed, he rolled up in a blanket and went to sleep.

Next morning, immediately after breakfast, Dick and Mr. Walters rode away, bound on their mission of getting up the company of "Home Protectors."

They were gone nearly the whole day, and when they came back that evening they announced that they had been successful, and had gotten up a company consisting of one hundred men and boys, and that Mr. Walters was to be the captain of the company.

"Where is Florence?" asked Mr. Walters, when, having put his horse in the stable and fed it, he entered the house and found only his wife there.

"She went over to spend the day with Lucy Hicks," replied Mrs. Walters.

"Oh, that's it? It's about time she was coming home, isn't it?"

"Yes; she will be here soon I doubt not."

"She oughtn't to stay out late in these troublous times."

"No; and I don't think she will do so. She will be home before dark, doubtless."

But Florence did not come home before dark; nor did she come home for some time after nightfall, and presently her father and mother became alarmed by her extended absence.

"I fear something has happened to her!" said Mrs. Walters, in an anxious voice.

Mr. Walters was afraid so, too, but he pretended to think lightly of the matter, and reassured his wife all he could. "I will go and see why she has not come home sooner," he said; "it isn't far over to Hicks', and I can get there quickly."

"It is more than a mile, and you had better ride a horse, Tom," said his wife.

"Oh, no; I can walk over there while I would be getting the horse ready. It is not more than a fifteen minutes' walk."

Mr. Walters took his departure and was gone scarcely more than half an hour. When he got back he was panting as if he had been hurrying.

"The Hickses say Florence left there more than an hour ago," he said, in answer to his wife's look of inquiry; "she said she was coming straight home and she should have been here before this."

"Oh, something terrible has happened to her—I know it! I feel it!" wailed Mrs. Walters. "Get Mr. Slater and his men and go in search of her at once, Tom! Something terrible has happened to Florence!"

Mr. Walters hastened out to where the "Liberty Boys"

were encamped and told Dick that Florence was missing, and asked him if he and the rest would help search for her.

"Most assuredly!" replied Dick; and then they set out at once.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FLORENCE A PRISONER.

What had become of Florence Walters?

As the Hickses had said, she had left there at dusk to return to her home. She had spent the day with Lucy and had enjoyed herself greatly, and was in great good spirits when she bade them good-by and started up the road.

She had gone perhaps a third of a mile when she turned aside from the road and entered the timber. The road made quite a bend at this point, and by cutting across through the timber she could cut off more than a quarter of a mile. She did not mind the extra walking that following the road would have entailed, but she had stayed at the Hickses longer than she had intended, and as it was now rapidly growing dark she knew her parents would be getting uneasy about her.

"I ought not to have stayed so late," she said to herself; "but when I get with Lucy it seems as if it is impossible to get away from her. She always has something interesting to tell one, and I hate to leave her."

Suddenly Florence paused and an exclamation escaped her. A man had stepped into the path in front of her and stood confronting her.

"Who are you?" she called out as bravely as possible, but her voice trembled somewhat, for the sudden appearance of the man had given her a start.

The man made no reply, but stepped nearer; and then a cry of dismay and anger escaped the girl's lips. "I know you now!" she cried; "you are the—the scoundrel who was going to kiss me yesterday and who was knocked down by one of your own comrades—as you deserved to be!"

The man chuckled when first the girl began speaking, but at her closing words he uttered an oath.

"Yes, I'm the man—and I am going to have the kisses from you, just the same; and I am going to have revenge on that scoundrelly Sheldon, too, if it takes me a lifetime—don't think otherwise!"



There was a viciousness about the utterance of the man that almost made the girl shudder. She instinctively recognized the fact that here was a man utterly without conscience or moral principle—a man capable of any crime, and her blood ran cold as she realized that she was alone with him in the depths of the forest.

She wondered if any one would hear her if she were to call out, and she got ready to do so if the redcoat made a move toward seizing her.

The matter was soon to be put to the test. It was evident that the fellow would attempt to take the kisses that he had failed to secure the other day. Florence put on a bold front, however, and thought that by so doing she might put off the trouble and might even manage to escape in some manner.

"Let me pass, sir!" she said, with dignity.

The fellow laughed insolently. "Oh, no, my pretty one!" he said, "I could not think of such a thing. I enjoy your company too greatly to let you go so soon."

"But I don't enjoy yours!"

"Perhaps not; but that makes no difference to me."

"It makes considerable difference to me; stand aside! I am going home."

"Don't be in such a hurry, my dear. You really must not think of hurrying away."

The redcoat spoke mockingly, and this made Florence very angry. She could do nothing, however, and so had to "grin and bear it," as the saying goes.

"I will cry out for help!" she said, spiritedly.

"No one will hear you if you do," was the careless reply.

Florence was afraid this was the truth, but she was not willing to let him see that she thought so.

"There is likely to be some one in hearing," she said, "and if so, and they come to my assistance, it will be bad for you."

"I'm not afraid. Just cry out as soon and as loudly as you like."

The girl looked at the redcoat in as fierce a manner as she was capable of and said: "Oh, I wish I had a pistol!"

"What would you do if you had a pistol?"

"I would shoot you dead!"

The tone was so fierce that there was no doubt that she meant what she said, and the redcoat laughed and said:

"In that case I must say that I am glad you haven't a pistol."

Suddenly Florence made up her mind to try the effect of a ruse, and she pretended to see something behind the

redcoat, and exclaimed, jubilantly: "Good! some one is coming! I am saved!"

"George Wallace, the redcoat, was deceived, and turned his head to look behind him. Florence was quick to improve her opportunity, and leaping forward she jerked a pistol out of Wallace's belt. He gave utterance to an oath, and seized the girl by the arm. Florence had succeeded in cocking the pistol, however, and fired just as the man seized her.

Wallace gave utterance to a cry of pain. "Oh, you have shot me, you tigress!" he cried. "But I'll pay you for that. Just you see if I don't!"

"I hope I have given you your death wound!" said Florence, and then lifting up her voice she called out: "Help! help!"

But there was no answering cry. It seemed as if she was to have to fight it out alone and unaided.

Wallace was pretty hard hit, the bullet having entered his right breast just below the shoulder, but he was not so weak as yet but what he was able to tie the girl's hands together behind her back. This done, he forced her to walk along, and a few minutes' walk found them at the door of an old, deserted cabin. Wallace forced the girl to enter and then tied her ankles securely and gagged her.

Then, and not until then, he made an examination of his own wound, and there was a grave look on his face when he had done so.

"I'm afraid the girl has given me my death wound!" he murmured, and the realization that he was severely wounded, instead of making him more vindictive, had the opposite effect. He was tamed by the seriousness of the situation. He had been bleeding freely ever since he was wounded and had been getting weaker and weaker, and now, all of a sudden, he became so weak he could not sit up, and sank over onto the blanket which he had spread on the floor. His face was deathly pale, and Florence, who was watching him, saw soon afterward that he had fainted.

She realized now that she was in an awkward predicament. Her captor was helpless to injure her, of course, but she was also helpless to render aid to herself and could not move or cry out.

What would happen? she wondered. Would the redcoat lie there and die of his wound, and would she remain a prisoner until she starved to death?

"Surely not!" she said to herself; "the folks will become anxious when I fail to reach home and will come in search of me. They will find me before morning, I am confident."

It was now dark, but the moon would soon be up and



would make some light—sufficient, at least, to dissipate the darkness in the room to some degree.

Florence was a brave girl, and as a rule was not afraid of the dark; but under the circumstances she preferred to have some light.

She waited patiently, and after half an hour or so the moon got up high enough so that its light entered the cabin through the doorway, the door having been left open by Wallace when he came there with Florence.

"That is better," thought the girl as she glanced over toward the motionless form on the blanket, and she shuddered. "I wonder if he is dead?" she asked herself. "I should hate it if I have killed a human being, but he deserved it; and if he is dead I shall not feel so very badly about it. He ought to have been more of a man and less of a scoundrel."

Florence was a philosophical little body as well as a brave one.

It was well that she was brave, for her courage was soon to be put to a severe test. She had been a prisoner in the old cabin an hour at least, she judged, when suddenly a shadow was thrown across the floor.

Florence was a pioneer's daughter, and the sight of the shadow was not calculated to reassure her. It looked about like the shadow that would be made by a good-sized dog, but the girl felt confident that the animal entering the cabin—and it was entering, Florence knew—was not a dog. She thought she knew what it was, and she slowly and carefully turned her head and looked.

Her guess regarding the kind of animal it was that was entering was correct. There was no doubt about it—it was a panther!

It was a full-grown panther, too; and, judging from its looks, a hungry one, for it looked gaunt and thin.

A thrill of horror went over the girl's form. She realized that her situation was dangerous in the extreme. Indeed, it was desperate.

Here she was, tied hand and foot, and gagged, so that she could not even cry out—and here was a gaunt, hungry panther within leaping distance of her!

She thought of the fate awaiting her and shuddered.

Then she watched the panther with a species of fascination. One thing that gave her a feeling of slight relief was that the animal had its eyes on the form of the wounded redcoat and was moving toward him.

Slowly and carefully the brute moved forward across the floor, its eyes fixed on the redcoat, its tail twitching. Its footfalls were so light that Florence could scarcely hear them. Indeed, so loudly did her heart beat that she was

not sure she could hear them at all. Certainly had Wallace been only asleep instead of unconscious, he could not have heard the footfalls of the tawny beast. They would not have awakened the lightest sleeper.

Slowly and cautiously the brute advanced. At last its nose was within six inches of the unconscious man, and the panther sniffed three or four times and then crept still nearer.

Florence, watching in breathless terror, expected that the beast would leap upon the redcoat and tear him to pieces; but it did nothing of the kind.

After sniffing a few times it put out one forepaw and gently touched the redcoat's form, giving a gentle pull at it as a kitten will pull at a ball of yarn. Having touched the form gently, the animal shrank back and crouched as if ready for a spring should the form show signs of life. Doubtless this was what it intended to do; but after waiting a few moments without seeing any signs of life in its intended victim, the panther again stuck out its paw and gave another clawing pull at the form.

Again the beast shrank back, waiting, but as before there was no movement from the redcoat, and the animal had its trouble for its pains.

This was evidently puzzling to the brute. It was motionless for nearly a minute, and then it crept closer and again sniffed at the unconscious form. A few moments of this and then it pulled at the redcoat hard enough so that he was turned partly over. A low but fierce growl escaped the brute.

"It has scented the blood from the man's wound!" thought Florence, with a shudder. "Nothing can save him now!"

But still the animal held back, crouching and growling in a low but fierce manner, and it stuck out its paw and clawed at the form, rapidly and somewhat fiercely, acting the while as if slightly afraid.

"It thinks the man dead," said the girl to herself; "that is lucky for him. Otherwise he would quickly be torn to pieces."

Of course, the redcoat made no move; and the panther, pausing presently, crouched back and waited, seemingly at a loss to know what to do.

Whether or not Florence moved and made a slight noise and attracted the animal's attention, she did not know, but certain it is that the panther suddenly gave utterance to an angry growl, and, turning its head, looked at the girl. It stared at her for nearly a minute—it seemed an hour to her—and then turned and came creep-



ing across the floor, its eyes still fixed on Florence's face, its tail switching from side to side.

"Heaven help me now!" thought the girl.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SHELDON SAVES FLORENCE'S LIFE.

Among those who went in search of Florence Walters was Don Sheldon, the ex-redcoat, but now a "Liberty Boy."

The "Liberty Boys" had scattered, and they went in every direction from the Walters home. It happened that Sheldon took a course that led him straight to the old cabin in the woods, where, as we have seen, Florence was at that moment, tied hand and foot, and gagged, and threatened by death from the claws and fangs of a hungry panther.

Sheldon was hastening along through the timber, keeping a sharp lookout in every direction, when suddenly he came out in the edge of the little clearing and saw the cabin at the farther side.

"It might be possible that she is there," he said to himself; "I'll see, at any rate."

He strode forward, and crossing the open space was in front of the cabin. He reached the open doorway and looked in. The sight that met his gaze was almost sufficient to paralyze him.

At the farther side of the room a human form lay upon a blanket on the floor, and at the end of the room, seated on a rude bench, was Florence Walters, bound hand and foot and gagged—and standing in front of her, crouched as if for a spring, was a full-grown panther!

The animal must have heard Sheldon's footsteps, for as he reached the doorway it turned its head and glared at him fiercely, while low but threatening growls escaped it.

Sheldon had not brought his musket, so was armed only with two pistols and a knife. He did not hesitate, however. He knew that unless he attacked the brute it would quickly tear the beautiful girl to pieces. He realized that he must act quickly.

Drawing both pistols he cocked them. Lifting the one in his right hand he took careful aim at a point just back of the brute's left foreleg. Sheldon was not a dead-shot with the pistol, but he was within ten feet of the animal and could hardly miss it if he tried. The only question was as to whether or not he could inflict a fatal wound.

As soon as he had secured good aim, Sheldon fired.

Crack! the shot rang out, followed instantly by a wild shriek of pain from the panther.

The animal was hard hit, but was not rendered helpless by any means; and realizing that its wound had been inflicted by the newcomer, the panther whirled with the quickness of lightning and leaped toward the man in the doorway.

Crack! Sheldon had fired the other pistol. The bullet must have struck the animal also, for another shriek escaped the panther; but all the fight was far from being knocked out of it and the next instant man and brute were rolling on the ground in a deadly encounter.

Sheldon had dropped his pistols and now, with rare presence of mind, he drew the long-bladed knife out of his belt and plunged it into the panther's body, again and again.

The panther was tough, but the knife thrusts in addition to the two pistol shot wounds were too much for it, and the man came forth from the encounter the victor. His clothing was badly torn, and he had received several severe scratches, but he had triumphed and saved the life of Florence Walters and was satisfied.

Sheldon's wounds smarted, and gave him considerable pain, but he gave the matter no thought. He had something else to think of; he had seen the girl sitting within the cabin, bound hand and foot, and he hastened to enter the cabin and cut the girl's bonds and remove the gag.

"What does this mean, Miss Florence?" he asked. "How came you here a prisoner?"

Florence pointed toward the form lying on a blanket. "He brought me here," she said.

"The scoundrel!" cried Sheldon. "Who is he?"

"Look and see; I think you know him."

Sheldon stepped forward, saying, as he did so: "What's the matter with him, is he dead?"

"I don't think so; he is severely wounded, however."

Sheldon had reached the form of the redcoat by this time and taking him by the shoulder turned him onto his back and took a look at his face.

"Great Scott! it is Wallace!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; it is the scoundrel who tried to kiss me yesterday evening and whom you knocked down."

"He is severely wounded," remarked Sheldon; "he has a bullet in his right chest."

"Yes," said Florence, simply.

A sudden suspicion crossed Sheldon's mind.

"Who shot him?" he asked.

"I did."

"You!"



"Yes." And then, in a few words, Florence told the story of her encounter with the redcoat, and how she had shot Wallace with his own pistol.

"What a brave girl you are, Florence!" cried Sheldon. "I may call you Florence, may I not?" he added, in an apologetic tone.

The girl looked at him with glowing eyes. "Indeed you may!" she exclaimed. "You may call me anything you please; for—didn't you save my life just now?"

"I suppose I did, Florence; and, do you know, the fact that I was able to do so makes me very, very happy!"

"Oh, Mr. Sheldon, do you really mean that?" said Florence, her voice trembling slightly.

"Do I mean it, Florence? Yes—and a great deal more. Oh, Florence, if I only could—if I only dared tell you all that I mean!"

There was a brief silence during which time the two looked at each other, and then Florence said, in a half-demure, half-bantering voice: "One who is brave enough to attack a panther with no weapons save a couple of pistols and a knife ought not to be afraid to say what he pleases to a weak girl like myself."

A feeling of joy went over Sheldon. Somehow he got the idea from the girl's tone and words that she thought considerable of him, and taking a quick step forward he extended his arms and cried, passionately: "Florence, I love you! Will you—may I hope that some day you will consent to become my wife?"

With a little cry of joy Florence leaped into the outstretched arms.

"I love you," she murmured; "and some day I will be your wife."

Sheldon folded the beautiful girl to his heart and kissed her, again and again, while he murmured: "You have made me the happiest man in the world, darling!"

"And I am the happiest girl—Don!" Florence murmured.

"How came you to take a notion to such a great, big stick of a fellow as I, Florence?" he asked.

"I have loved you from the moment you interfered with—him," pointing to the form of Wallace.

"Then I owe him something for the happiness of this moment, little sweetheart," said Sheldon; "and that makes me think that while he is a scoundrel, yet I should try to do something for him. I will see if I can summon some of the boys by firing off some more pistol shots—ah! I hear footsteps; some of them are coming now!"

He hastened to the door and saw three of the "Liberty Boys" approaching.

"I've found her, boys!" he called out.

"Hurrah!" was the cry, and the three rushed forward and in another instant were in the cabin.

They were surprised when they saw the unconscious redcoat lying there, and when Sheldon and Florence had told the story of how she came to be in the cabin they decided that they would carry the wounded man to the home of Mr. Walters and see if they could do anything toward saving his life. A rude litter was improvised and the four men carried the redcoat, while Florence led the way.

When they reached the house Wallace was taken to a spare room and placed on a comfortable bed, and Dick, who was one of those present, made a careful examination of the wound.

"I think he will get well with careful nursing," he said.

Then he went to work and dressed the wound with considerable skill, and then stimulants were administered and presently the wounded man came to.

"Where am I?" he asked, weakly.

Only Dick and Mr. Walters were in the room, and Dick told the man that he was where he would be taken care of. "Don't worry; you will pull through all right," he said.

"Where's the—girl?" he asked huskily.

A frown came over Mr. Walters' face, but Dick answered, gently: "She is at home, safe and sound, and you might as well dismiss her from your mind. You have gotten yourself into trouble twice on her account, and you will do well to never make any more attempts in that direction."

"I—never—shall!" was the reply. "She is—the—the—bravest girl I ever—ever saw, and I'll never bother—her—again."

"That is right; and see that you stick to it."

Signal shots had been fired as soon as the "Liberty Boys" arrived at the Walters home with Florence, and soon the youths who had been searching for her returned, glad to know that she had been found and that nothing serious had happened to her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DICK IN ARNOLD'S CAMP.

An hour after the return of Florence in safety, Dick Slater, dressed in the uniform that had been worn by Don Sheldon when he was in the British army, and mounted on a good horse, rode away from the Walters home. He



was headed southward, and was on his way to spy upon the British under Arnold, and also to try to find General Marion, who was supposed to be somewhere in that part of the country.

Dick rode steadily onward, and an hour later drew rein and listened and looked for several minutes.

"I should be within a short distance of Arnold's encampment," he said to himself; "Sheldon said I would find it somewhere in this part of the country. I am on a high place here and should be able to see the lights of the camp-fires."

Presently an exclamation escaped the youth's lips. "Yonder is a faint reflection above the tree-tops, and I doubt not that is where the British are encamped. I should judge that it isn't more than half a mile distant, so I will leave my horse here and go on afoot."

Dick dismounted and led his horse into the timber beside the road. When in a distance of a hundred yards he paused and tied the horse to a tree. Then he left the spot and making his way back to the road walked onward.

When he was close to the encampment he left the road and again entered the timber. "I shall have to be careful," he thought; "they will have sentinels out, doubtless, and I mustn't stumble on one of them."

Slowly and cautiously Dick advanced and presently he paused and took a survey of the situation. He had come to a large, open space of several acres in extent, and in this open space the British were encamped.

"This is Arnold's force, sure enough!" said Dick to himself. "He has quite a large force, too."

Dick was standing there gazing out upon the animated scene when suddenly he was seized from behind. He struggled, but was helpless, for there were at least three men who had seized him; and strong and athletic though he was he could not hold his own against such odds.

He was soon thrown to the ground and his hands bound together behind his back, after which he was marched into the encampment.

It had been quite dark in the shadows of the trees, but the instant they were out in the open and Dick's captors saw that he had on a British uniform they gave utterance to exclamations.

"Who in blazes are you?"

"Why didn't you say you were a British soldier?"

"What ails you, anyway?"

Dick thought he might succeed in getting free and quickly spoke up: "I thought you were rebels," he said; "I supposed that, of course, none of you fellows would attack a comrade."

But the redcoats were pretty shrewd fellows.

"He's a stranger," said one; "and let's take him before General Arnold. He may be a rebel spy!"

"That's so!" agreed one; "we'll take him before Arnold."

"I assure you that you are mistaken," said Dick; "I am a British soldier like yourselves."

"Well, we don't say that you are not, but we'll take you to Arnold and let him settle the matter," was the reply.

Dick saw it would do no good to protest, but he did ask that his hands be freed. "There is no necessity of having me bound in this fashion," he said; "I could not possibly get away even if I wished to do so—which I do not."

Of course, this was not the truth, but Dick did not deem it wicked to lie to the enemy.

"I don't see any objection to freeing your arms," said one; "you couldn't get away, as you say."

"Of course not."

Then the belt which had been buckled around Dick's wrists was unbuckled and his arms were free.

"I guess I might as well face Arnold," thought the youth; "I have a curiosity to see him, anyway, and if I have to make a break for liberty, and take chances, I shall take a shot at him; for of all men I would prefer to put a bullet through that arch traitor!"

The little party had attracted considerable attention as it made its way across the clearing, and a number of redcoats called out to their comrades and asked what was the trouble. The three made such answers as they saw fit and kept on till they came to a tent near the centre of the encampment.

"Tell General Arnold that we wish to see him," said one of the soldiers to the orderly who sat in front of the tent.

He rose and entered the tent. Reappearing a few moments later he said: "Enter; he will see you." He held the flap, which constituted the door, back as he spoke.

The redcoats pushed Dick through the opening ahead of them and then followed.

They were in the presence of General Arnold, the man whose name was infamous throughout the country on account of his terrible act of treason.

Dick eyed him closely without seeming to do so. The youth had met Arnold once before when the latter was an honored officer in the patriot army, up near Saratoga, and he wondered if the man would remember him.

"If he does," thought Dick, "it will be all up with me, for he is aware that I have done a great deal to damage



the British, and will be glad of the opportunity of getting me out of the way."

Arnold looked up, frowningly. "Well," he said, "what do you want?"

One of the men stepped forward, and, saluting, said: "We have a prisoner here, sir, which is the reason of our coming. We thought that perhaps you would wish to see him."

Arnold ran his eyes over the four, a surprised and puzzled look on his face.

"A prisoner?" he said. "Why, you are all British soldiers and I don't understand what you mean?"

"This man was found hiding behind a tree and spying upon the encampment," the spokesman said, indicating Dick.

"Ha! Say you so?" Arnold exclaimed, and then he took a good look at Dick.

The youth stood the scrutiny well, but was afraid it was all up with him. He was nearly three years older than when Arnold had seen him, true, but he had not changed much. His face had some scraggy beard, where it had been smooth; this was about the only difference. It must have changed his appearance considerable, however, or else Arnold's memory was bad, for no light of recognition came into his eyes.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Sam Sparks."

"Are you a British soldier?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"Georgia."

"What are you doing up here?"

"I came to join Arnold's force."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Who were you with down in Georgia?"

"Tarleton."

"Tarleton, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you leave him?"

"I had a falling out with one of the men and came near killing him; and Tarleton told me that he did not blame me, but that as the man I had hurt had a lot of friends he thought it would be best for me to go somewhere else and join some other force."

"And so you came up into Virginia, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were you doing, spying on the encampment?"

"I was trying to decide whether or not it was Arnold's force."

"Humph!"

Dick could not tell what the exclamation meant, so said nothing.

"How are things down in Georgia?" asked Arnold presently.

"Oh, all right!" was Dick's reply.

"Humph! so you wish to join my force, do you?"

"I should like to do so, sir."

Arnold was silent for a few moments, during which time he knitted his brows and seemed to be thinking deeply. Presently he took up the candle from off the little portable table and handed it to the redcoat who had acted as spokesman.

"Hold it close to his face," he said.

Dick steeled his nerves to enable him to undergo the ordeal which he knew was coming.

"He is suspicious and thinks it possible that he has met me before," thought the youth; "I am afraid he will recognize me, but perhaps he may not."

The redcoat took the candle and held it close to Dick's face.

Arnold leaned forward and studied the youth's features closely, searchingly. Dick was on a great nervous strain, but he did not flinch. Indeed, no one, to have seen him, would have suspected that he was at all worried.

Arnold studied Dick's face for nearly a minute, and then suddenly a peculiar light leaped into his eyes. Dick was watching him closely and saw it.

"He has recognized me!" he thought; "it is all up with me now!"

Arnold made no sudden or excited exclamation, however. Instead he settled back in his camp-chair and looked down at the ground for a few moments in silence. Then he looked up and said, in the most quiet, matter-of-fact manner imaginable:

"Haven't I met you before?"

Dick answered as quietly: "Not that I know of, sir."

He noted that the officer inclined his head and seemed to be listening to the sound of his voice, and a sudden thought came to Dick: "He fancies that he remembers my voice," he said to himself.

"You think we have never met before?"

"I think not, sir."

Arnold was silent a few moments, and then said: "I think we have met before."

"You think so?"

"Yes."



"Where, if I may ask?"

"In New York State—up near Saratoga! Am I not right?"

Dick shook his head. "I think not, sir," he said, calmly, though his blood was running cold; "I have never been in New York State."

"I am sorry to have to dispute you, my young friend," was the cold but triumphant reply; "but I know better than that. You were born and reared in New York State; I have heard you say so yourself."

"You must be mistaken, sir," said Dick, determined to fight it out to the bitter end; "you mistake me for some one else. I have never been in New York."

"You do it well, my boy," in a tone of admiration; "but I know you."

"You do?"

Dick was still as cool and calm as could be.

"I do."

"I don't think you do, sir; for I am Sam Sparks, of Georgia, as I have already told you; but who do you think I am?"

"I do not think anything about it; I know you. You are Dick Slater, the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76!'"

Exclamations of amazement escaped the three redcoats who had made Dick a prisoner.

Could it be possible, they asked themselves, that this was indeed the famous commander of the company of "Liberty Boys?"

Dick was still cool, calm and composed. "Are you sure you are right, sir?" he asked, quietly.

"Quite sure!" was the positive reply, with a triumphant smile.

"And you are sure that I am Dick Slater?"

"I am."

"And no denial of mine would make you think differently?"

"No."

"Very well; so be it!" Then, quick as a flash, Dick drew a pistol and leveled it.

"Die, you cowardly traitor!" the youth cried fiercely.

Then crack! went the pistol, and with a wild cry of pain and terror Arnold tumbled off the stool to the ground!

## CHAPTER IX.

### DICK AND THE "SWAMP FOX."

Instantly all was confusion.

The three redcoats had been so amazed and paralyzed

by the bold and unexpected action of the youth that they could not do anything. Even after the shot had been fired, and their commander fell to the ground, dead, as they supposed, they were incapable of making a move for a few moments and Dick was quick to avail himself of the opportunity thus presented.

He knocked the candle out of the redcoat's hands and placed his foot on it, thus extinguishing the light and plunging the tent in utter darkness.

Next he struck out with his fists and knocked a couple of the men down, after which he leaped across and lifting the edge of the tent darted underneath it just as the orderly came rushing in from the opposite side.

Dick realized that he was in terrible danger, however.

The entire camp was aroused and men were rushing toward the spot from all directions.

With admirable presence of mind Dick ran and met the approaching redcoats, crying out as he did so: "That prisoner has shot and killed General Arnold! Where is the surgeon? He may not be entirely dead yet!"

The advancing redcoats were excited and so were not surprised to see that the man running toward them was excited. They did not pay much attention to him but continued onward toward the tent.

Before they reached it, however, two or three men darted under the edge of the canvas and ran toward them.

"Where is? Where did he go?" they cried.

"Where is who? Where did who go?" was the counter query.

"The rebel spy!" from one.

"Dick Slater!" from another.

The advancing crowd paused and began to ask questions. They presently learned that the man who had been taken to the tent a prisoner had turned out to be Dick Slater, the noted "rebel" spy, and that he had shot General Arnold and taken flight.

"That was him we met running away!" cried one, quicker witted than his fellows. "Come; we must catch him!"

The crowd whirled and darted away in pursuit of the fugitive, who was seen entering the timber at the farther side of the clearing.

A great hue and cry was raised and soon a hundred men were in pursuit of Dick.

The youth did not mind this, however. He was feeling pretty good just about then, for he had gotten through the worst of the ordeal he was confident. He was now in the timber and felt that he would be able to escape even if a thousand British soldiers were after him.



"I am skilled in woodcraft," he said to himself, "while they know little or nothing about such things. They might as well try to find a needle in a haymow."

He kept on running and soon had the satisfaction of hearing the sound of the shouts of his pursuers growing fainter and fainter.

"I am leaving them behind," he thought; "well, I might as well begin making the circuit, for I must get back to where I left my horse."

He started on the long circuit and after half an hour of rapid traveling reached the spot where his horse was tied.

As he drew near the place he heard the animal kicking and plunging around and snorting as if in fear of something.

"What can be the matter, I wonder?" the youth asked himself; and then he advanced slowly and cautiously, watching carefully as he did so.

When he was within a few yards of the horse he caught sight of a man who was trying to get close enough to the animal to untie the halter strap. He was a tall, roughly dressed fellow, and Dick saw at once that he was not a redcoat.

"Some wandering rascal who thought he would ride a while instead of walking, I suppose," thought the youth; "well, I will give him a little surprise."

Then, pistol in hand, he stepped forward and said: "What are you about, you scoundrel?"

The man uttered an exclamation and whirled around. When he saw that the other had him at a disadvantage, he cried out:

"Don't shoot, mister!"

"I'll shoot if you don't give an explanation of your actions, and that quickly!"

Dick saw that the man was one of those peculiar men who make a living hunting and trapping; this was shown by his dress.

"Oh, I wuzn't doin' nothin'," was the sullen reply.

"I know better. You were trying to get my horse."

"Oh, is this your hoss?"

"It is."

"Is thet so?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I'm glad I know et, mister. Ye see, I wuz on'y wantin' ter fin' out whose hoss et wuz. I hain't got no use fur er hoss."

"Your curiosity got the better of you, eh?"

"I guess thet's erbout et."

"Very well; I don't believe your story, but I don't wish

to shoot you and can't be bothered to take you prisoner, so you may go."

"Much obleeged, mister."

The man walked away, but paused when he was fifteen to twenty yards distant and called back, in a peculiar, high-pitched, nasal voice: "Ye hed better tell ther Whig people up aroun' Tom Walters' place ter keep theer eyes open! Ther Tories air gittin' reddy ter do er lot uv devilment up thar, an' they're goin' ter do et afore very long!"

Dick was surprised. Who was this man and what did he know about the matters of which he spoke? Dick called out to him:

"Wait," he said, "I wish to have a few words with you."

But the man leaped away and almost instantly disappeared from sight in the depths of the forest. Dick knew it would be useless to try to follow him as the fellow was a born woodsman and even an Indian could not have found him.

"I would have liked to ask him a few questions," the youth thought, "but it really doesn't matter; he has warned me, and the knowledge that danger threatens sufficient for our purpose. We can be on the lookout for trouble now."

Just then Dick heard the sound of voices. They were in the direction of the redcoat encampment and were coming closer and closer.

"There come the redcoats!" thought Dick; "I must be getting away from here."

He untied his horse and led him out to the road. Leaping into the saddle he rode away toward the north. He had gone perhaps half a mile when he suddenly found himself confronted by four horsemen, who leveled their muskets at him and called out to him to halt.

Dick saw the men were redcoats; he could see their scarlet coats quite plainly in the moonlight, but he was in a hurry to get back to the Walters home and did not fancy being detained. It might be possible that he would be made a prisoner by the redcoats if he stopped to parley, so he whipped out his pistols and fired two snapshots as quick, almost, as thought.

One of the redcoats fell to the ground, while another reeled in the saddle. The horses of all four began rearing and plunging, and the result was that while the two remaining redcoats fired at Dick their shots went wild and he was not injured.

Dick put spurs to his horse and dashed forward, at the same time drawing his other two pistols—he always car-



ried four—and as he came even with the redcoats he fired two more shots.

One of the two redcoats who had not been hit at the first fire, went down, and the other uttered a cry of pain and anger. Onward up the road went Dick, and the redcoats were speedily left behind.

“I got through that in first-class style,” thought Dick. “I guess they were not expecting any resistance on my part, and it took them by surprise.”

The youth had ridden not more than half a mile farther when he found himself confronted by a party of at least ten men, who were stretched across the road in such fashion as to make it impossible for him to get past without encountering one of them.

“Halt!” cried one of the men. “Who are you?”

Dick thought it best to obey the command, and brought his horse to a stop. Then, too, there was something about the men which made him think they were friends.

“I am a friend, I think,” replied Dick, quietly. “Who are you?”

One of the men laughed. “You are all right!” he said; “you are certainly possessed of considerable shrewdness.”

“Thank you; don’t you think that, as you outnumber me ten to one, it is only fair that you tell me who you are before I tell who I am?”

“Well, I don’t know but you are right; then know you that we are members of General Marion’s band!”

“What!” exclaimed Dick, in delight; “you mean the ‘Swamp Fox?’”

“Yes. And now, who are you?”

“I am Dick Slater, captain of ‘The Liberty Boys of ’76,’ and we have come down into Virginia to join you and help you make things lively for the redcoats!”

“Are you indeed Dick Slater?” was the question in eager tones.

“I am.”

“And where are your men?”

“Camped near a farmhouse about two miles from here.”

“Good! General Marion will be delighted to hear that.

Will you come with us and see him now?”

“How far is it to where he is?”

“Half a mile back in the timber.”

“Yes, I will go with you.”

“Good! come along.”

The men rode into the timber and Dick accompanied them. He rode in front, alongside the leader, and they conversed as they went. By the time they reached the encampment of the “Swamp Fox” the youth had a good knowledge of what it was that Marion wished to accom-

plish, and was ready to give all the aid in which would be considerable.

When General Marion saw Dick and learned who he was he was delighted. He wrung the youth’s hand and told him how glad he was to meet him.

“And you say your force is within two miles of here?” he asked eagerly.

“Yes, sir,” replied Dick.

“How many men have you?”

“One hundred.”

“Good, good! It was evident that Marion was delighted.

“And I have only eighty men,” in a half-musing tone; “your force will more than double my strength, numerically at least. With that number we ought to be able to strike Arnold some severe blows.”

“I think so, sir.”

“And you will join me, Mr. Slater?”

“I was sent down here by the commander-in-chief to find and join you or Lafayette and assist all in my power to hold Arnold in check and protect the homes of the Whigs in this part of the country.”

“Good! And you will join me at once?”

“At once; this very night if you wish.”

“Within the hour, if possible, Mr. Slater,” eagerly;

“I have discovered where a blow may be struck the enemy, and if your men will join me at once we will go and get in the blow before morning.”

“I will go at once, sir, and bring my men.”

“Do so; and get here just as quick as possible.”

“I will do so.”

Dick mounted his horse and rode away. He soon reached the road and then urged his horse forward at a swift gallop. Ten minutes later and he was at the home of Mr. Walters.

He made his way back to where the “Liberty Boys” were in camp, and awoke Bob Estabrook. “Get the boys up at once, Bob,” he said; “I have found General Marion and he wishes us to join him at once and go on an expedition against the British to-night. Hurry!”

“I’ll get them up right away, Dick. But what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to the house to speak with Mr. Walters. Danger threatens the Whigs from the Tories, and I wish to warn him to be on his guard and keep a sharp lookout for trouble.”

Dick made his way to the house and knocked on the door, and when Mr. Walters came he told the man what the trapper had told him—that danger threatened the Whig



the Tories, and warned him to be on the look-out.

"I am going away with my 'Liberty Boys,'" explained Dick, "and you will have to look out for yourselves."

"Is that so—going away?" exclaimed Mr. Walters. "When are you going?"

"Right away; the boys are up and getting ready to start now."

"Where are you going?"

"We are going to join General Marion, who is about two miles from here; but he is going somewhere to-night to strike the British."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes; and now I will say good-by; I hope, however, that it will be only for a short time that we will be away. I trust that we will meet again before many days have passed."

"I hope so. Well, good-by!"

"Tell your wife and daughter good-by for me."

"I will."

Then Dick returned to the camp and found the boys ready to start. No time was lost, but mounting they rode away. As soon as they were in the road they moved forward at a gallop, and half an hour later were in General Marion's camp.

The "Swamp Fox" looked the youths over with kindling eyes. "A likely looking lot of fellows!" he said; "and if all accounts are true they are fighters, too. Now to go and strike the redcoats a blow that they will remember!"

To Dick he said: "We had better leave our horses here. It is only about a mile to the British encampment and we will not need the horses; in fact, they would be in our way and retard our progress through the timber rather than facilitate it."

"That is true," agreed Dick. Then the "Liberty Boys" dismounted and tied their horses.

The youths were objects of considerable interest to the men under Marion. They were in the main, rough, uncouth, hardy and illy dressed men from the mountains of North and South Carolina, and some of them had doubts regarding the fighting abilities of the youths who were to join issues with them.

"Kin yo' boyees fight?" asked one rugged mountaineer, who was chewing vigorously at a great quid of tobacco.

"Well," replied Bob Estabrook, with a wink at some of the boys who were standing near and had heard what the man had said, "what we lack in fighting abilities we make up in running qualities."

"Oh, that's it?" in a perfectly serious tone.

"Yes; we will guarantee to run any of the redcoats to death who may take it into their heads to chase us."

"Hum! waal, thet's all right, ef yo' kin do et," was the reply.

The "Liberty Boys" laughed. They were good-natured and were willing to wait till the time came for fighting to show their new comrades that they could fight as well as they.

A few minutes later the word was given to start and the force moved away through the timber. The men under Marion were old woodsmen and could move through the timber as silently as the redmen of the forest, and they soon learned that their new comrades could do the same. This increased their respect for the youths to a considerable degree. They had expected that the youths would make so much noise it would be impossible to get within being heard, and they were agreeably surprised.

Marion had had some such fears as had his men, and he, too, was agreeably surprised. To Dick, who was in front beside him, he said: "Your men are wonders, Mr. Slater. They seem to be fine woodsmen."

"They were almost to a man born and reared in the timber," was the reply; "and they are almost as well versed in woodcraft as are the redskins themselves."

"Which is fortunate, as it will enable us to slip right up to the enemy's camp without our coming being discovered."

When they were within a quarter of a mile of the British encampment a halt was called and four men were sent ahead to locate the sentinel on that side and quiet him. The men returned, after a brief absence, and said that the way was clear.

Then the order was given to advance slowly and cautiously, and the men obeyed. They crept forward until right at the very edge of the clearing in which was the encampment. Here they paused for a few moments and then, of a sudden, the sharp command to charge came from the lips of the "Swamp Fox."

"Forward, men!" he cried. "Charge, and give it to the scoundrels!"

The men obeyed the order on the instant. Leaping forward they dashed into the encampment, and as the startled redcoats leaped up they were shot down or bayoneted. Instantly, almost, the camp was in an uproar and the redcoats came swarming out of their tents like hornets out of their nests. There were at least fifteen hundred men in the camp, and they so greatly outnumbered the "Swamp Fox's" force that it was his intention to make a quick, sharp rush forward, shoot and bayonet all he could in a



few moments and then retreat as soon as the enemy came forth in force; but he had reckoned without the "Liberty Boys" when deciding to do this. They were eager for the fray and not inclined to stop so quickly. So when Marion, in his sharp, high-pitched voice, gave the order to retire they did not obey. Instead they kept right on going and fought their way ahead with such energy that the redcoats gave way in terror. Wild cheers went up from the "Liberty Boys."

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" they cried, again and again, and kept firing their pistols and bayoneting all who came within reach of them; and so fierce was their rush and attack that the redcoats were utterly demoralized. The thought came to them that they were attacked by a force equal to their own, and they did not for a moment think that such a small force would dare invade their encampment; the result was that the "Liberty Boys" went clear across the clearing, cutting and slashing, shooting and bayoneting, cheering and yelling, and created such havoc, such a terrible disturbance, in fact, that the British were unable to do anything, comparatively speaking, until it was too late, and the enemy had disappeared in the timber at the farther side of the opening. Then they suddenly awoke to the fact that they had allowed themselves to be roughly handled by a mere handful, and their rage knew no bounds.

The British officers yelled orders at the top of their voices and a large force went in pursuit of the daring "Liberty Boys." They might as well have remained in camp, however; they could no more have caught the youths than they could have captured a will-o'-the-wisp.

They returned half an hour later, tired and disgusted. To the question from one of the superior officers if they had been able to catch any of the enemy, the leader of the pursuing force growled out: "Catch nothing! Why, one might as well try to catch a streak of greased lightning as to catch those fellows!"

"I wonder who they were, anyway?" was the remark of the officer.

"Why, the 'Liberty Boys,' as they are called. Didn't you hear their war-cry?"

"I heard something that sounded like a war-cry, but did not fully catch the words."

"They were: 'Down with the king! Long live Liberty!'"

"Ah, yes; that does sound like it."

"It is the war-cry of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' too, I know; for there is a man in my company who was once in the northern department, and who has fought against

the 'Liberty Boys,' and he told me that it was their war-cry."

"Well, if I ever get a chance at those 'Liberty Boys,' as you call them, it will go hard with them, I promise you that!"

The redcoats had good cause to be out of humor. More than half a hundred had been killed and wounded in that quick, fierce rush of the "Liberty Boys" and Marion's men, and so far as they knew they had not killed a single one of the attacking party.

It was an affair that rankled in the minds of the British officers, and Arnold—who had been only slightly wounded and not killed by Dick's shot earlier in the evening—was like a wild man. He raved and threatened and sent out men in every direction in search of the daring force of men who had attacked so boldly.

The different forces returned, one by one, later on, with the report that they could find no traces of the party that had struck them the blow.

Arnold was angry and disappointed. "Wait! I will get a chance at that rascally Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys' yet!" he muttered. "And when I do he will wish he had not tried to shoot me, and had not played such a trick as he has played to-night!"

There was no doubt of the fact that Dick Slater would fare badly if he was to fall into the hands of Arnold, the arch-traitor.

## CHAPTER X.

### A BLOW AT THE REDCOATS.

Meantime what of Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys," and Marion and his men? The latter had been surprised by the action of the youths. When he gave the order to retire, Marion expected that all would obey him; but while his own men did so the "Liberty Boys" did not. They were bent on showing their comrades that they could fight. They had not forgotten what the old mountain man had said, when he had asked them if they could fight, and they were determined to set the minds of the "Swamp-Fox's" men at rest on the point, once and for all.

That they had done so was evident, for when Marion and his men had reached the encampment, twenty minutes later, many were the exclamations indulged in by the rough fellows.

"I ruther guess them youngsters kin fight ez well ez



run!" said the man who had had the conversation with Bob Estabrook.

"Yer right erbout thet!" from another.

"Yas; I guess ther redcoats think ez how they kin fight!"

"Thet's right; say, they is jes' erbout ther heftiest fellers in er scrimmage thet ever I seen!"

"They air fur er fack!"

"They are brave boys!" said Marion. "Brave even to rashness."

"Yer right erbout that, gin'ral," was the reply of one of the men; "but et wuz thet very rashness thet made et safe fur 'em ter do what they did. Ther redcoats thort ez how thar wuz a big force arter 'em an' wuz all bu'sted up an' didn't know whut ter do."

"You are right about that," from Marion; "well, I wish they would hurry and come for we must get away from here very soon."

"Thet's right; ther redcoats'll be snoopin' aroun', a-lookin' fur us purty quick, I reckon."

"So they will."

Just then the "Liberty Boys" entered the camp. They were tired, but triumphant, and were greeted with a subdued cheer by Marion's men.

"Mount your horses at once, for we must be getting away from here," said Marion. "Are any of your men so badly wounded they can't ride, Mr. Slater?"

"No; we got through in fine shape. Two or three of the boys are wounded, but only slightly. We are all right and good for another skirmish at any moment."

The entire party mounted and rode away through the timber, and after a ride of an hour a halt was called. All dismounted, and here they went into camp for the night.

"This is a secluded spot, and I don't think there is any danger that the redcoats will find us," said Marion.

He placed a cordon of sentinels, and then all lay down to get some needed rest and sleep.

They were up bright and early next morning and Marion conferred with Dick, and with his officers.

"There have been a number of outrages committed by the redcoats at a point a dozen miles to the southward," he said, "and I have a good mind to go down there and strike the enemy a blow while they are looking for us in this neighborhood. What do the rest of you think about it?"

All said they thought it would be a good idea, and so it was decided to put General Marion's plan into execution. The order to mount was given, and twenty minutes later the entire force was riding away from the place where they had spent the night.

A roundabout course was chosen, as it was not desired to encounter Arnold's force, and it was almost noon when they reached the point for which they were headed. A brief stop was made just long enough for them to eat a bite and let their horses graze; and then they remounted and rode onward in search of the redcoats who had been committing the outrages in this vicinity.

Half an hour later, when they had reached the top of a high hill an exclamation escaped Dick.

"We will find them yonder!" he cried. "See, there is a house on fire! The scoundrels are at work!"

He pointed his finger, and the others, looking in the direction indicated, saw that Dick had spoken the truth.

"Forward!" shouted Marion. "If we hasten perhaps we may strike them before they can get away. We may even be able to take them by surprise. Forward!"

The party dashed down the slope and rode toward the burning house at a gallop.

The house was only about a mile distant and it did not take them long to reach it. An intervening strip of timber hid them from the view of any persons in the vicinity of the house and the result was that they were enabled to catch the redcoats napping. They dashed out of the timber at a point scarcely more than a hundred yards distant from the house, and the redcoats were taken entirely by surprise.

There were about one hundred of the British, and straight toward them rode Marion and his men and Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys."

The patriots were yelling and cheering like mad, and the redcoats turned and ran toward the timber at the back of the house with all possible speed. Their horses were tied to the fence in front of the house, but they realized that the enemy would be upon them before they could mount, so they preferred to take their chances on escaping on foot.

Marion's men rode to the fence and stopped there long enough to fire a volley at the fugitives; then they leaped to the ground, climbed the fence and started in pursuit firing as they ran.

Perhaps half the British force succeeded in reaching the timber and making its escape, but the other half went down, thirty of their number being killed and twenty-two wounded.

Marion's men went to work and succeeded in extinguishing the fire. Only the shed portion had been burned, the main portion of the house being saved. The owners of the house, a Whig family by the name of Larkins, were profuse in their thanks to General Marion and his men.



"That is all right," said General Marion; "that is what we are here for—to save the homes of patriots and to kill many of the redcoats as possible. I am indeed glad that we got here in time to save your house."

Spades were procured and the dead redcoats were buried; then the question of what should be done with the wounded men came up.

"Are there any Tory families in this neighborhood?" asked General Marion.

"Thar's three uv 'em within half a mile uv here," replied Mr. Larkins.

"Good!" said General Marion; "I suppose you have a team and wagon?"

"Yas; two uv 'em."

"So much the better. Hitch up teams to both wagons at once. Put some hay or straw in the wagon-beds so as to make it as easy riding as possible, and we will put the wounded redcoats into the wagons and haul them over and leave them with your Tory neighbors."

"All right; I'll 'tend ter et, sir."

Mr. Larkins called to his fifteen-year-old son and together they went to the stable. In half an hour's time they were back, bringing the wagons.

The wounded redcoats were loaded into the wagons and hauled to the homes of the Tories. The latter did not care about receiving the wounded men, but Marion soon put a stop to the utterance of objections.

"You are their friends!" he said, sternly; "somebody has to take care of these wounded men, and it is only right and proper that those who sympathize with them should be the ones to administer to them. Don't say another word; you must take care of them, and that is all there is to it!"

The Tories made no further objections. They saw that they were in for it and that the best thing they could do was to accept things as they were, without any words, and make the best of it.

When the wounded men had been thus disposed of, all returned to the home of Mr. Larkins. Nothing more had been seen of the redcoats, and it was probable that they had not stopped until they were well away from that neighborhood.

Marion was well pleased over the result of the encounter, and said that if he could get another blow in on the redcoats who had been doing so much deviltry in this vicinity he would be ready to return and give Arnold his attention hence more.

To this end Marion and his men remained in that neighborhood, but Dick and the "Liberty Boys" took their

departure, to go back up in the vicinity of Richmond, as a messenger from Lafayette had come, telling them that there was likely to be some lively fighting in that part of the country soon.

Marion said his men would be sufficient to cope with the redcoats in the Larkins neighborhood, and for Dick to go and join Lafayette, if he wished, and so the "Liberty Boys" set out. They made a detour and got around Arnold's force and continued on, northward, till they came in sight of the home of Mr. Walters. As they did so a cry of amazement and consternation escaped the lips of all.

"The redcoats have burned his house!" cried Dick. "They are there yet, boys; forward, and let's make them wish they had not done their cowardly work!"

Forward the "Liberty Boys" dashed, with wild cheers.

## CHAPTER XI.

### "THE LIBERTY BOYS' " JUSTICE.

There were at least a hundred of the redcoats standing in the yard of the Walters home, but when they saw the "Liberty Boys" charging down upon them they ran to their horses, and, leaping into the saddles, started to flee.

The youths were upon and among them before they could get away, however, and a terrible hand-to-hand conflict was waged. The "Liberty Boys" were the attacking party, however, and got in several volleys which so demoralized the enemy that it could not do much. True, the redcoats fired two or three volleys, but the men were trying to flee at the same time that they were firing, consequently had to fire almost backward, and their aim was bad—indeed, they were not able to aim at all, so to speak. They simply reached around behind them, extended their pistols, and fired at random. Of course, they wounded several of the "Liberty Boys," and killed one, but did not do much damage, comparatively speaking.

They were chased half a mile by the main body of "Liberty Boys," but Dick Slater had caught sight of a British officer coming out of the stable, and he brought his horse to a stop, leaped to the ground, and, running across the yard, covered the officer with his pistol and called upon him to surrender.

The officer did so, and was disarmed by Bob, who had followed Dick. Then they conducted the prisoner to where



the house had been and found Mrs. Walters and Florence there.

"So those scoundrels burned your home, after all, Mrs. Walters?" said Dick, after greeting the two.

"Yes," was the reply, in trembling tones; "I was afraid that something of the kind would be done. They have been especially angry at us on account of the fact that they got into trouble here twice before, and I suppose they were determined to burn us out of house and home, come what might."

Dick's eyes flashed as he turned his gaze on the British officer. "You caused that house to be burned," he said, sternly; "and you shall replace it, better than it was before, or I shall hang you and my 'Liberty Boys' shall burn a dozen Tory homes!"

The officer was frightened; this was evident, for he turned pale and trembled.

"I—I will—will do whatever you—you say, young sir!" he stammered; "only don't—don't talk of h-hanging m-me!"

"There is just one way you can escape hanging," was the stern reply; "and that is by getting your men together and bringing them back here and forcing them to rebuild this house. Say that you will do that and your life shall be spared; refuse, and your carcass shall swing from the limb of a tree!"

"I promise!" was the reply. "But how am I to get my men to come back?"

"That is easy enough. Here come my men, and I see they have several prisoners. We will send one of the prisoners after his fleeing companions, with an order from you for them to return. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Good! Write the order at once and we will send the man in pursuit of his comrades."

The British officer did as Dick had ordered, and as soon as the "Liberty Boys" got there he approached one of his men and handed him the slip of paper and said: "Take that and give it to one of the men and tell him that unless they return here immediately I shall lose my life. You understand?"

"Wait just a moment," said Dick; "I wish to look at what you have written."

He took the slip of paper and read what was written on it. Then he handed it back.

"It is all right," he said; "you may go, and if you know when you are well off you will bring all your comrades back with you. If you fail, your commander, here,

and these other prisoners shall hang, as sure as my name Dick Slater!"

The fellow rode away at a gallop. There was no doubt that he appreciated the gravity of the situation, in so far as his commander and the other prisoners were concerned.

Mr. Walters appeared just then, and with him was Dick Sheldon. The latter had remained at the home of Mr. Walters when Dick and his "Liberty Boys" went southward with Marion, on account of the fact that he had been clawed pretty badly by the panther that he had killed. The cabin the night it came so near eating Florence. The two had been away on some business, and the British had had no opposition when they put in an appearance and made ready to burn the house. Mrs. Walters and Florence had pleaded, and Florence had talked pretty saucy, but to no avail; and they had withdrawn to the shelter of the timber and had watched their home go up in flames. When Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" put in an appearance and put the redcoats to flight, they were delighted; and they were even more delighted, now, when they saw that there was some hope that their home would be rebuilt.

It was nearly two hours later when the redcoats put in an appearance, and they were a glum-looking lot when they reined up their horses in front of the burned house. The "Liberty Boys" disarmed them and piled their muskets and pistols at a distance, after which Dick told Mr. Walters that he should take charge of the gang and direct them in their work. While waiting, Dick had sent to the homes of several neighbors and secured axes and saws and adzes, and now all was ready for the men to begin work.

It was rather an amusing sight to see the redcoats enter the timber and begin the work of chopping down trees, cutting them up into logs of the proper length, sawing off the ends and squaring them with the adzes. The work was new to them, and they were very awkward; but Mr. Walters went about among them, as did Dick and several of the "Liberty Boys" also, and gave them instructions in the art of doing the work. The redcoats sweat and cursed under their breath, for it was hard work, and they uttered many audible groans and a great many more that were inaudible. Their hands, unused to such labor, soon became blistered, and then the groans and curses rose higher and higher. It was no use, however, they had to keep at work. If they were to quit their commander would be hung, and they themselves would, in all probability, be shot down. There was no alternative; they had to keep at the work as distasteful as it was.

As fast as the logs were gotten in shape for use they were carried out into the opening and piled where they



ould be handy when wanted, and the piles grew with rapidity, for there were at least fifty men at work.

To say that the "Liberty Boys" enjoyed what was going on is putting it mildly; but the redcoats did not enjoy it. They had buried twenty comrades who had fallen in the encounter with the "Liberty Boys," before going to work, and this had put a damper on their feelings, to start with. When there were a dozen wounded men, and these had been taken to the homes of a couple of Tory neighbors of Mr. Walters."

Of course, it was impossible that the house should be built in one day. Indeed, it took three days to do the work, during which time the "Liberty Boys" kept the redcoats at work during the daytime and guarded them at night, so there was no chance for them to escape. The redcoats kept a cordon of sentinels out, too, for they feared Arnold might hear of what was going on and send a force to attack them and rescue their comrades.

And Arnold undoubtedly would have done so, for he had heard of what was going on; but Lafayette got after him and he had all he could do to look after himself for a while, so the redcoats at Mr. Walters' were forced to look out for themselves.

At the end of three days the house was finished, and so far as the house itself was concerned it was just as good as the one that had been burned. The furniture, however, would have to be replaced later on, and this was the greater loss. Dick had wormed out of the officer the fact that he had some money, and he made him send a messenger to Petersburg, where he said he had his headquarters, and bring one hundred pounds in gold, which was handed over to Mr. Walters. With this money he would be able to replace all that had been destroyed by the fire.

Before letting the British officer and his men take their departure, Dick took the officer to one side and said: "I wish to tell you something and impress it upon your mind: if this house is burned, or if you bother Mr. Walters again, I shall make it my business to make a clean sweep of the homes of every Tory in this part of the country—do you understand?"

"I understand," was the reply; "and you may be sure of one thing, and that is that I shall not bother any of the Whig families in this vicinity again. I have had enough of it, and if anything happens to any of them you may be sure that it was some one else who did the work and not I."

"Well, it matters not who does the work; if the homes of any of the Whig families in this vicinity are burned, or if any of the people are bothered in any way, I shall

burn the homes of all the Tories; so if you know when you are doing well you will tell your redcoat friends, when you go back, that it will be best if they refrain from any further work of that character in this vicinity."

"I'll tell them."

"Do so; you will get to see and talk to them, and I won't."

That afternoon the redcoats took their departure. They were allowed to take their horses but not their arms. "We need the weapons and will keep them," said Dick; "but we don't need the horses, and have not the feed for them, so you may ride back."

The redcoats were glad enough to get away on any terms, and lost no time in doing so. They rode away at a gallop; nor did they slow up so long as they were in sight of the "Liberty Boys" and their friends.

"Well," said Dick, turning toward Mr. Walters and his wife and daughter, with a smile, as the redcoats disappeared from view, "the forcing the redcoats to rebuild your home and reimburse you for the loss of your furniture is what I call merely an act of justice—it is, I may say, 'Liberty Boys' justice. What do you say? Don't you think we dealt it out about right?"

"I do!" said Mr. Walters, decidedly.

"I think so!" from Mrs. Walters.

"It was glorious!" cried Florence. "Oh, it did me good to see those redcoats have to work! It served them right!"

The "Liberty Boys" all said the same, and taken all in all no one was so very sorry that the affair of the burning of the Walters home had taken place. It had given them a chance to strike the British a hard blow and teach them a very much-needed lesson. Dick felt confident that it would have a good effect in that it would make the redcoats more careful about burning and pillaging.

His work was completed here, now, however, and he got ready to take his departure, to look for and join Lafayette. When he told Mr. Walters that he was going to go, Don Sheldon took him to one side and asked him if he might remain behind.

"Aren't your wounds healed sufficiently yet?" asked Dick, giving the ex-redcoat a searching look.

"Yes," was the reply; "so far as they are concerned, I should be able to go with you, but I'll tell you: Florence Walters has promised to marry me, and she wants me to stay here and not go to war any more."

Dick smiled. "I suspected something of the kind, Sheldon," he said; "well, I must congratulate you, for Florence is certainly a splendid girl. She is a prize for any man."



"She is, indeed!" was the enthusiastic reply. "She is the sweetest, best and dearest little girl in the world; and I am the luckiest fellow alive! I don't see how she ever came to take a notion to me, do you?"

"Oh, there isn't anything so very strange in it, Sheldon," replied Dick. "You are not a bad-looking chap, and then, you know, you saved her from insult from your comrade, Wallace, and later saved her life when threatened by the panther, and why should she not fall in love with you? I think it the most natural thing in the world."

"Well, I'm glad she did, anyway; and I am the happiest fellow in the world, Dick. But I hate to ask you to let me remain behind, when I know there is work for me to do."

"What are you going to do here, Sheldon?"

"I thought—indeed, Florence, she—she—we both thought that—that——"

"Don't be backward Sheldon," with a smile; "out with it."

"Well, we had in mind that we would be married right away, if you were willing that I should stay here, and I hope that you will be, for—for I fear that we shall both be greatly disappointed if you refuse."

"You will settle down and live here if you marry?"

"Yes; Mr. Walters has a large farm, and says he will be glad to have my help in taking care of it."

Dick was silent a few moments, during which time he was thinking rapidly, and Sheldon was watching him anxiously. Presently Dick spoke: "Is there a preacher near here that you could get quickly?" he asked.

Sheldon's face lighted up. "Yes; only a couple of miles away," was the eager reply.

"And would you be willing to be married at once—this evening?"

"Yes, yes! We should be glad to do so!" was the reply; "that is, if you will permit me to remain here after I am married."

"Of course I shall do that, Sheldon; and I will say that after so much real work and fighting, I am sure that all my boys are ready for a little recreation, so if you will get married this evening and get some of the boys and girls of the neighborhood in so we can have a dance and a social time, we will celebrate your wedding and the completion of the new house at one and the same time."

"Good! That will please Florence, I know!" cried Sheldon; "and she will be right in for it. Wait a minute till I speak to her about it, though, to make sure."

Sheldon hastened away and talked to Florence a few minutes; then both went and talked to Mr. and Mrs.

Walters, after which all four came to where Dick was standing.

They told him that they were in for having the marriage take place that evening in the new house, and that the young people of the neighborhood would be only too glad to come and witness the marriage and have a dance afterward.

"Most of the girls would give their eyes to get to dance with one of the 'Liberty Boys!'" said Florence, with smiling face.

So it was decided; and there was a great hustle and bustle, for it was now three o'clock, and before eight, at which hour the ceremony was to be performed, it would be necessary to get the house furnished in a slight degree by borrowing some furniture from some of the neighbors, and the preacher would have to be brought; the neighbors would have to be called upon to furnish some food supplies as well, as it would be desirable to have a supper, and all this would take a good deal of time and work. There were a hundred of the "Liberty Boys," however, and they were eager for the sport and ready to work hard to get the chance to enjoy themselves. The result was that by seven o'clock the Walters house was reasonably well furnished; there was food a-plenty on hand, and already cooked, too, and ready to be eaten; the preacher was on hand also, and all that remained was for the company to come and then the ceremony would be performed.

Soon the young people began pouring in, and by a quarter of eight the house was crowded; indeed, it was impossible for one-third of those present to be in the large sitting-room when the ceremony was performed, but that did not matter; as soon as it was over they marched through the room and shook hands with the bride and groom and congratulated them. Then the dancing was begun in the sitting-room, and others were eating in the kitchen, and the fun was kept up fast and furious, to the music furnished by a couple of darkies of the plantation, who played a banjo and fiddle, and played them very well, too.

There were a goodly number of young men of the neighborhood present—one, in fact, for almost every girl—but on this night they were forced to take a back seat, so to speak. The girls wished to dance with the "Liberty Boys," and they did dance with them almost to the exclusion of their beaux. The country youths were good-humored about it, however, and took it in good part. The majority were quite willing that their girls should dance with the soldier boys, but there were a few who were somewhat jealous-hearted and they probably suffered some.

Taken as a whole, the evening was a most enjoyable one



to the majority of those present. Indeed, Sheldon and Florence were so happy that they set a good example for all the rest.

The dancing was kept up till nearly daylight, and it is probable that the sun was up before some of the young people got home, as there were couples present from a distance of three to four miles.

The "Liberty Boys" threw themselves down on their blankets, at their camp, and snatched two or three hours sleep, and then were as good as new, for they were used to losing sleep and it did not have much effect on them. They ate their breakfast and then, bidding Mr. and Mrs. Walters, and Sheldon and Florence good-by, they mounted and rode away toward the south.

"If we are back this way again we will make it our business to come and see you," said Dick, and he was urged to do so.

They had ridden about two miles when they were challenged, and Dick was delighted to find that they had run onto a detachment of Lafayette's army. He asked the way to the main encampment, and one of the soldiers went with them and guided them to the encampment.

When Dick introduced himself to General Lafayette he was given a joyous greeting.

"I am indeed glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Slater!" said Lafayette; "I have heard many stories of the bravery of your 'Liberty Boys,' and I am about to make an attempt in which I shall be only too glad to have you join with me, as your assistance will be very valuable."

"Anything we can do will be gladly done," Dick hastened to say.

"I was sure of that; I met General Marion yesterday and he told me how you aided him in giving the redcoats a thrashing a few days ago, down to the southward a ways."

"You saw General Marion, you say?"

"Yes."

"And is he going to assist you in this attempt which you are going to make?"

"He is; and has already gone to take up his position. We will move this afternoon."

"And what is it you are going to do, if I may ask?"

"We are going to make a concerted attack on the British under Arnold."

"Ah, that is it, eh?"

"Yes."

"I am glad to hear it; I would rather assist in bringing

that scoundrel and traitor to task than to aid in anything else that I can think of.

"And I shall be glad to give him a blow; he is worse than the British themselves, Mr. Slater."

"I am aware of that. He has pillaged and burned since coming down into Virginia, and it is time he was brought up with a round turn."

"Well, that is what I hope to be able to do."

Soon after dinner the entire force under Lafayette moved away toward the south, and the soldiers were in a lively mood. They scented fighting and were eager to get at their enemies.

Especially was this the case with the "Liberty Boys," who were always ready for a fight.

The army marched southward a distance of perhaps five miles and then stopped and rested till nightfall. Then Lafayette sent out spies, who returned after an absence of a couple of hours and reported that Arnold's force was within a mile of them.

"Are they in a strong position?" asked Lafayette.

"Not so very; we can take them by surprise, I am confident," was the reply.

"Good! I hope that we shall be able to do so, and if we do succeed I think we shall be able to put a check to the burning and pillaging by the men under Arnold."

It was decided to make no move till near midnight, and the men even lay down and snatched two or three hours' sleep before it was necessary to start on the expedition.

Promptly at midnight the entire force moved forward. It advanced cautiously, being more than half an hour in going the mile that intervened between the two encampments. The redcoat sentinels were on the lookout, however, and detected the approach of the patriot force and fired their muskets and alarmed the camp.

"Charge!" cried Lafayette, seeing it was useless to try to take the enemy by surprise. "Charge! and give it to the scoundrels!"

The patriot soldiers charged forward, with ringing cheers, and in the front ranks were the "Liberty Boys."

On the night air rose the wild, thrilling war-cry: "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

Lafayette's men took up the cry and it went up in such a roar as must have sounded threatening indeed to the redcoats.

Soon the rattle and roar of musketry and the crack! crack! of pistol shot volleys broke on the air and the carnage was under way.

It was a terrible engagement while it lasted. The red-



coats had not been taken wholly by surprise, but they had been taken at a decided disadvantage, and they were unable to make a strong stand. They fought for a while with desperate energy, but when they had emptied their muskets and small arms and saw the advancing host, they decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and broke and fled.

The patriots followed with yells and cheers, and there was a running fight for quite a ways, and then the pursuers stopped and returned to the late encampment of the enemy.

It was found that over a hundred of the British had been killed and seventy-five were wounded, while of the patriots only twenty were killed and twenty-two wounded.

"It is a great, a glorious victory, Mr. Slater!" said General Lafayette, delighted, when the two met later on.

"Yes, we did give them a pretty good thrashing," agreed Dick.

"I think it will be a wholesome lesson to Arnold, don't you?"

"Yes, I think it will do him good."

Just then General Marion and his men put in an appearance. They had missed the fight. They had tried to get there in time to render some aid to Lafayette, after

they heard the sound of the firing, but had been unable to do so.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter," said Lafayette; "Mr. Slater and his brave 'Liberty Boys' were with me and we were able to administer a sound thrashing to Arnold."

"But I should have been glad to help in the good work!" said the "Swamp Fox," regretfully. "I wish we could have been with you!"

But the redcoats, had they known that the "Swamp Fox" was not in the fight, would not have grieved over the matter, doubtless. The "Liberty Boys" were bad enough, and if they had been aided by Marion's desperate fighters it would have been even worse.

Thus ends the story of the "The Liberty Boys' Justice."

THE END.

The next number (60) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS BOMBARDED; OR, A VERY WARM TIME," by Harry Moore.

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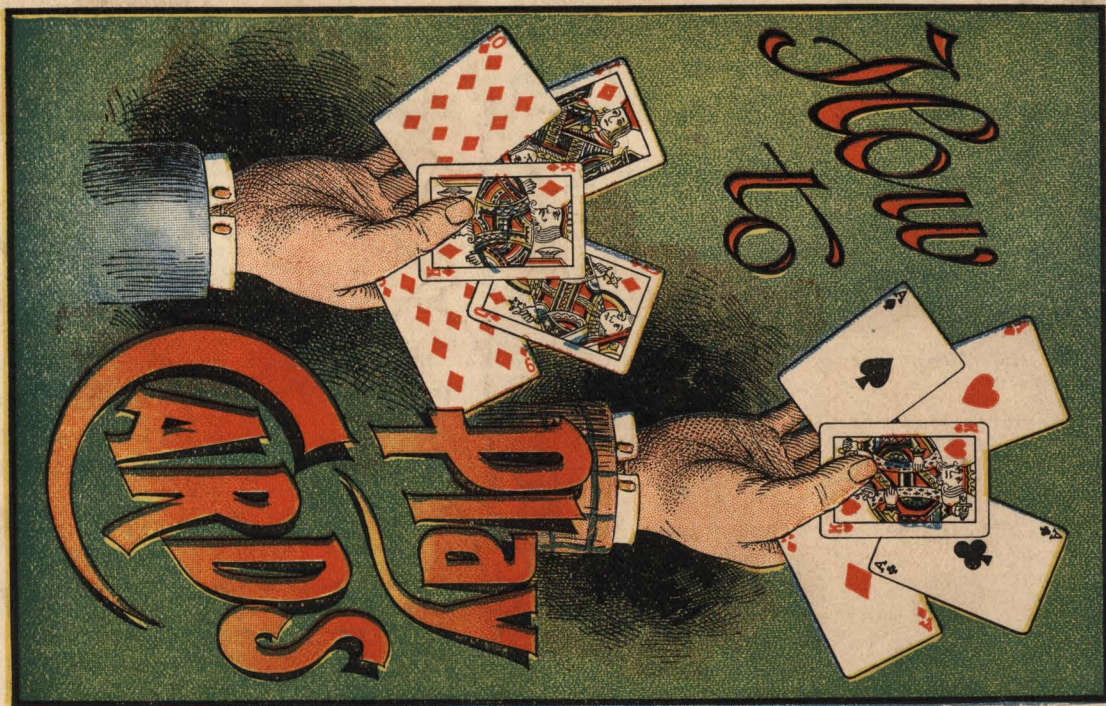
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